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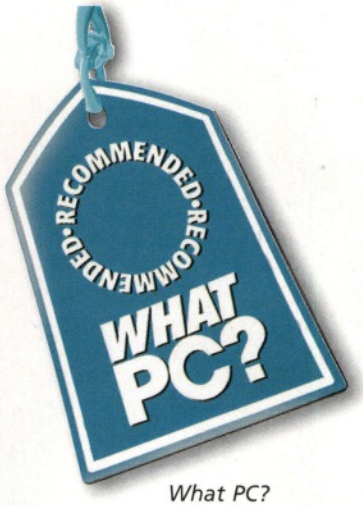
Internet Magazine
December 98

PC Magazine
April 99



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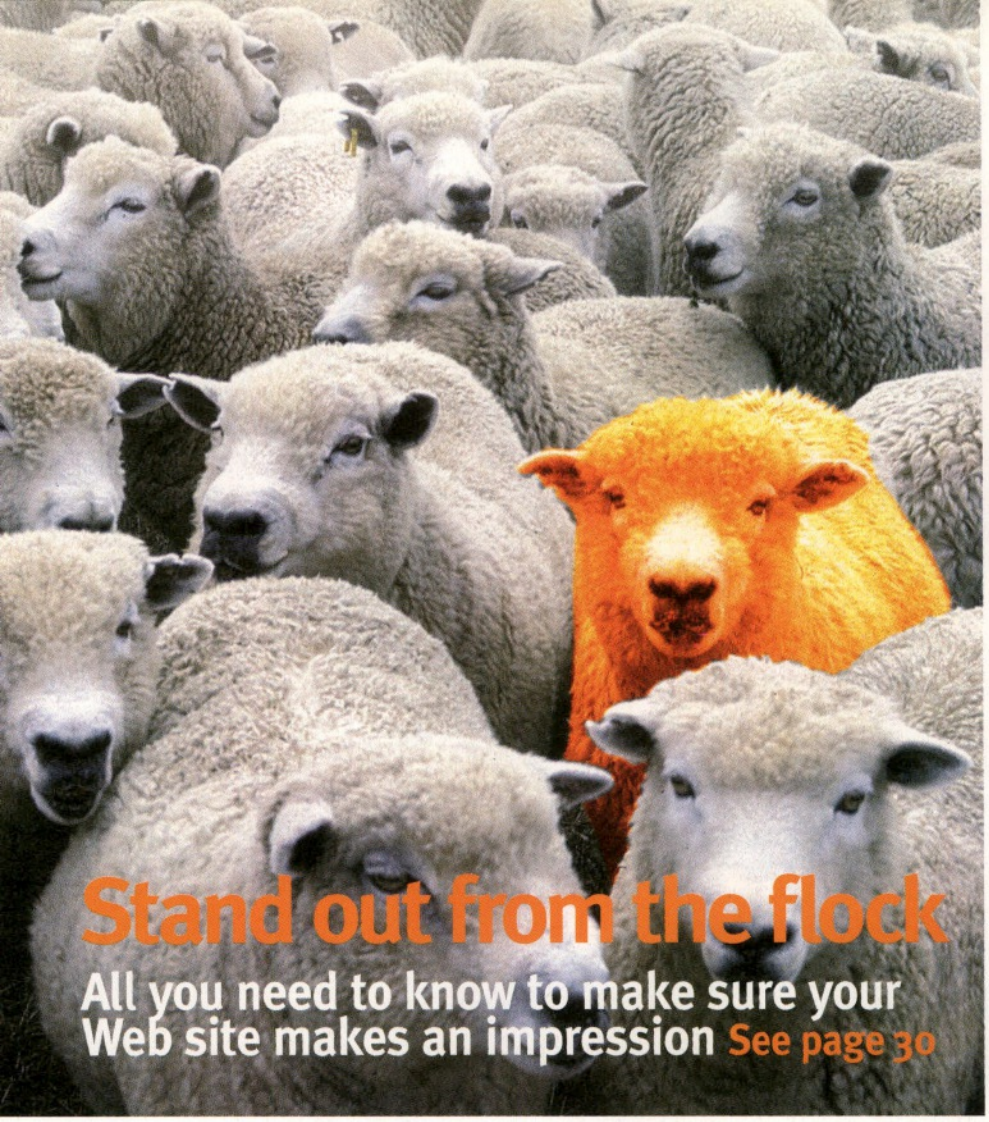

Stand out from the flock

All you need to know to make sure your Web site makes an impression See page 30

Stick it in!

ON THE CD

This month's cover CD features a huge range of useful programs to help you build a great site and enhance your Internet experience

See page 8 for details

Subscribe Now!

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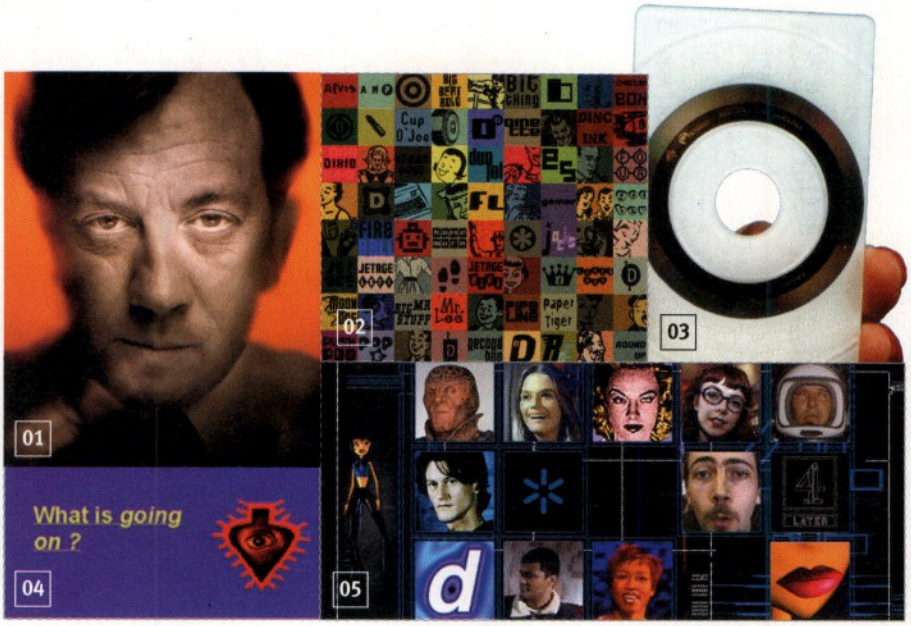

01) John Swingewood is BT's Internet Multimedia Services director – read our Interview with him on page 20; 02) Dinc Type's site from Hot Downloads on page 80; 03) The CD-ROM on a business card is tested on page 95; 04) Adobe's GoLive 4 is reviewed on page 94; 05) Channel Four's site is July's Site of the Month on page 68

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I'm a criminal

I'm a low-down, good-for-nothin' outlaw. And here's why.

A couple of weeks ago I went in search of a couple of illegally-recorded MP3s on the Web. I used the excellent Lycos MP3 search engine (at **http://mp3.lycos.com**) and found the songs very quickly. I downloaded the files to my hard disk and played them back for a few days, trying three different playback programs – Winamp (at **www.winamp.com**), Windows Media Player (at **www.microsoft.com /windows/mediaplayer/default.asp**) and the latest version of RealPlayer (at **www.real.com**).

By Saturday morning I was totally hooked. I went straight down to my local record store and bought the latest albums by the two artists whose MP3s I'd taken from the Web.

Using my free version of Audiograbber, the CD ripper from **www.audiograbber.com** (see page 111), I made MP3s of my favourite tracks to load into my portable MP3 player.

I've been breaking the law like this for years. A quarter of a century ago, my mother was an accomplice. She had to sit by my old radio cassette recorder every Sunday night with a list of songs I wanted from the Top 20, while I joined the church choir for evensong. But it didn't stop me buying the seven-inch and 12-inch vinyl versions back then, and I'm still buying the same songs today, only on nostalgic CD compilations.

I understand the arguments against MP3s, and as a writer and photographer, I don't need to be lectured about copyright. But I just can't help myself.

Tracking down the songs and scoring a hit on a site gives me a thrill. But even the small files take up valuable hard disk space, so within a few days I either get rid of them for good or, if I really like the music, I'll replace them with the original album on CD.

There are no illegal copies on my hard disk now, and there won't be for some time after this issue hits the streets.

Martyn Moore
Editor

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All the services you would expect from Virgin are on Virgin Net. The Cinema Channel offers full programme details for all major cinemas throughout the UK. Virgin Net's Music Channel gives you the low-down on new releases and gigs. And getting from A to B is simplicity itself with the Virgin Net Travel Channel. From what's on to what to spend it on, Virgin Net has been designed to make your life easier.

Disclaimer

Please note: manufacturers will not support demo software and you install these programs on your machine at your own risk. We have tested them for viruses and corruption, and at time of shipping these all checked out fine.

Internet Magazine and EMAP Active cannot be held responsible for any problems arising from their use, or for the failure of any programs to run correctly.

You'll find most of the software on this CD is shareware. Shareware developers put in a lot of work for little return and you should register software you continue to use after the evaluation period. Charges for shareware are usually very modest and registration entitles you to customer support and free or cheap upgrades.

Using your CD

The interface for the CD is written in HTML, which means you can open it in any browser. Just open up your browser, select the File Open option, access your CD drive and then load up the file index.htm.

If you don't have a browser, fear not. We've thoughtfully included the latest versions of Netscape Communicator and Internet Explorer on the CD for Windows 9.x/NT4 and the Mac. You'll find them in the Browser section on your CD.

So, what are you waiting for?

To get online in less than five minutes, simply put the CD on the front of this magazine into your PC or Mac and follow our step-by step instructions. Then, after answering a couple of on-screen questions, you're free to enjoy the world of the Internet.

Virgin Net – the simplest way to get the most out of the Internet

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your cover CD

This month's must-have software

For your toolkit

CoffeeCup DirectFTP New version of client (Win9x/NT)
Phone Monitor Keep track of online time and costs
Tardis 2000 Sets PC clock (Win9x/3.x/NT)
TopDog Site position and ranking checker (Win9x)
WinZip Evaluation version Handles ZIP, TAR, BinHex, UUencode, MIME and other formats (Win 9x/3.x/NT4)
WS_FTP Time limited demo Organise your file downloading and uploading activities (Win9x/NT4)
FileHound Lives to look after your downloads
FPArchie Downloads Archie sites via FTP (Win)
DirectX Multimedia extensions for Windows (Win 95)
Adobe Acrobat Reader Reads PDF files (Win/Mac)
Vbrun Visual Basic runtime libraries (Win 95)
Stuffit Expander The great archive unpacker (Mac)
OT/PPP Strip Connect, disconnect and switch between dial-up connections (Mac)
Anarchie Pro New version of FTP tool (Mac)
Mac OS Runtime for Java Runs apps and applets
Link Checker Hunts for dead links (Mac)
TechTool Checks for system corruption (Mac)
FreePPP Modem and configuration connections (Mac)
Download Deputy Batch download systems (Mac)
Fetch Well-known file retriever... good dog! (Mac)

Great Graphics

ProJPEG Prepare optimised JPEG images
Artistscope Limited evaluation version Encrypts images to protect from theft (Win9x/NT)
Xara 3D High quality 3D images (Win9x/NT)
GIF Animator 15 day trial Ulead's top-notch GIF animation program (Win9x/NT4)
EyeDropper Shows RGB or hexadecimal values of a pixel (Win9x)
Web Graphics Optimizer 30-day trial Changes compression and colour depth (Win9x/NT)
Paint Shop Pro Evaluation version As close as is possible to Adobe Photoshop (Win95/3.x)
ProJPEG Optimises JPEG images (Mac)
Graphic Converter Save and convert images in a wide range of file formats (Mac)
WebPainter Vector and bitmap animation tool (Mac)
WebVise Totality Six Photoshop plug-ins (Mac)
PhotoGIF Unregistered version won't allow saves Create and edit GIFs with Photoshop plug-in (Mac)
Graphics Plug-ins/Filters More plug-in filters for Adobe Photoshop (Mac)

Email

Spam Solution Stop spiders sucking email addresses
Pegasus Mail Popular free email client (Win3.x)
SpamEater Delete unwanted email from your server before you waste time downloading it (Win9x/NT)
Deadletter demo Content-based junk filter (Win9x/NT)
Spam Bait Creator A fiendish little program to get back at spammers with spurious mailto links. (Win9x)
Eudora Light Freeware version (Win9x/3.x/Mac)
Eudora Spell Checker For Eudora Light (Win9x/3.x)
Email Merge Program for database mailings (Mac)

Editors

Actinic Catalog 30-day trial Set up an online sales catalogue
QDCat Creates a Web store catalogue and order system
Splash! WYSIWYG HTML editor lets you design pages without any coding knowledge
Frame-It Utility that generates frames (Win3.x/Win9x)
CatKing 30-day trial Aimed at small business users wanting a simple Web presence
Style Master Control over style sheets (Win9x / NT)
SmartScript A simple tool for creating JavaScript
SurfMap JavaScript 30-day trial Build JavaScript-based navigation components without writing code
JavaScript Editor Simple JavaScript program (Win9x)
1st Java Navigator 28-day trial Java navigation for Intranet and Internet systems (W9x)
Smart Site Maintenance tool for your site (W9x)
WebScripter 30-day trial HTML and JavaScript editor
Applet Widget Kit Designed for non-programmers. (Win9x)
Browserola Emulates view of different browsers (W9x)
Web Gateway 98 Page wizard and FTP client (W9x/NT)
Button Generator Evaluation version Creates BMP and JPEG images for captioned buttons
Pretty HTML Source code styling tool. (Win9x/NT)
Web Weaver 98 30-day trial HTML editor (Win9x)
Arachnophilia Converts RTF to HTML (Win9x/NT)
Meracl ImageMap Generator Clickable images (Win9x)
CoffeeCup HTML Editor++ Latest release (Win9x/NT)
HomeSite Evaluation version Award-winning HTML design tool for professional developers (W9x/NT4)

Dreamweaver 2 30-day trial Supports everything you can do with a Web page, almost (Win9x/NT/Mac)
JS++ 30 day trial JavaScript and HTML development environment (Win9x)
SiteExplorer Pro Displays the contents and structure of your Web site in Windows Explorer style (Win9x/NT)
HoTMetal PRO 30 day trial Powerful, feature-packed Web development tool (Win9x/NT4)
Hot Wax Pro JavaScript enhancements for non-programmers (Win9x/NT4)
VSE HTML Turbo 121-day trial Recently updated tool that optimises HTML documents (Mac)
Style Master Opens and edit style sheets
Freeway 30-day trial Powerful and accessible way to create Web sites (Mac)
BBEdit, BBEdit Lite The classics (Mac)
HexWeb Typograph Demo restricts some characters BBEdit fontextension (Mac)
GoLive CyberStudio Packs a lot of power into a well-organised interface (Mac)
HTML Editor Straightforward HTML editor (Mac)
MapEdit Creates imagemaps for Web pages (Mac)

Browsers

Internet Explorer 5 Here it is! The final release version with lots of extras (Win9x/NT4)
MicroSurfer Speedy navigation tool (Win9x)
WebZip Download, store and view sites offline (Win9x)
Webcelerator Web accelerator (Win9x)
Netscape Communicator 4.5 A major upgrade to the Netscape suite (Win9x/Mac)
Opera 3.5 Fast and simple (W9x/W3.x/NT3.51)
Shockwave Flash Player installer Plug-in now plays Director and Flash (W3.x/W9x/NT4)
Sherlock Find files and search the Internet (Mac)
Internet Explorer 4.5 With Outlook Express (Mac)
Surf Express Deluxe Offers many browsing enhancements (Mac)
URL Manager Pro 30 day limitations Manages bookmarks for Explorer and Navigator (Mac)
CyberViewer Updated navigation aid (Mac)

Bits 'n' Pieces

Aesop Award Submitter Automatically submits entries (Win9x/NT)
Digiguide Electronic TV programme guide (Win9x)
Aquatica Screensaver Beautiful screensaver
Demon Internet 30-day FREE trial Internet access software, Turnpike, plus 30-day trial
Birthdays and Such Daily reminder program (Mac)
GoMac Adds something like the Win9x Task Bar (Mac)
Planet Earth 3-D model of Earth (Mac)

Multimedia

Planet.MP3Find Searches MP3 servers
Juke Play back and manage audio and video files (Win9x)
MP3 Strip It All-in-one solution for MP3 creation
Stream Anywhere Tool for producing streaming multimedia (Win9x/NT)
ACID Music Creates streaming audio files in Windows Audio format (Win9x/NT)
WinAmp MPEG player New version of MP2, MP3, WAV, MIDI, MOD, and CD audio player (Win9x/NT)
Flash 3 Evaluation version Creates interactive multimedia content (Win9x / NT4)
RealPlayer Live audio and video player for the Web (Win9x/NT/Win3.x/Mac)
Apple QuickTime Software includes browser plug-in for viewing QuickTime movies (Win3.x/Win95/NT4)
Animation Maker GIF animation tool (Mac)
MacAmp MP3 and audio CD player (Mac)
Electrifier Pro Fast-downloading multimedia (Mac)
Macromedia Flash Evaluation version Great Flash authoring application (Mac)
Shockwave Flash Plug-in Delivers interactive buttons, drawings and animations (Mac)
Apple QuickTime Including browser plug-ins (Mac)
SoundEffects Recording, editing and conversion software (Mac)

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EU says yes to bulk email

European Parliament passes new law making it perfectly legal to send spam

The European Parliament has decided to ignore expert recommendations and make junk email (otherwise known as spam) perfectly legal.

EuroCAUCE (the European Coalition Against UCE) and others in the Net community had asked the EU to treat junk email, known to Net savvy marketing businesses as UCE (unsolicited commercial email), in the same way as unsolicited advertisements sent by fax and robot phone calls.

If their request had been successful, it would have been against the law to send unwanted bulk mailings (UBM). Users would have to ask to be included on a commercial email list.

However, after extensive lobbying from companies and marketeers, the ministers at the council voted against this option. Instead of the popular opt-in system for unsolicited email, you'll now have to opt out. So you'll have to request to be taken off each company's email list.

This might not sound too different to the opt-in system, but it has its drawbacks, as Keith Mitchell of LINX (a professional association for ISPs) explains: "It's misguided. The sheer volume of spam creates significant expense for ISPs as well as consumers, and opt-out lists are open to abuse.

"No one body has responsibility for opt-out lists," says Mitchell. "There's no law covering them, as there is with other personal data covered by the Data Protection Act. Spammers are now free to ignore requests – they can treat them as evidence that their spam has been read, and even sell the addresses. If the spam originates outside the EU, an opt out system is completely useless."

The latest directive – Article 10 of the directive of 20 May, *Concerning Distance Contracts* (97/7/EC) – must be implemented in national law by all member countries within 18 months.

But it's not all bad news. The law requires that the spammer tells the target what country the email is coming from. Secondly, senders of UCE must identify themselves as such. But this information doesn't have to be in the headers, so you'll still have to download and read the email before you find out what it is.

One part of the new law allows member countries to add more bite to the directive's requirements, so consumers should get more protection – as long as this extra protection doesn't conflict with other EU laws.

The directive comes after Virgin's successful action against a subscriber who used its service to send spam, resulting in Virgin being added to the Realtime Blackhole List. Any ISP that's added to the list is automatically stopped from sending any email by other ISPs.

The new law will mean, in theory, that a spammer will be able to sue an ISP if it blocks the spammer's email. This scenario is unlikely, but unsolicited bulk mail is on the increase, and this EU decision can only send spammers the wrong message.

www.euro.cauce.org

Shoulder pork and ham was never this complicated

NET ACCESS

Virgin Net in need of new partner

Success of 'going free' leaves Virgin in need of second backbone

Virgin Net is looking for an additional backbone supplier to help it cope with the extraordinary number of new customers (around 25,000 a week) since it dropped its subscription charges. And the ISP hasn't even made a big marketing promotion yet.

Virgin's Sophie Rauber said one of the reasons behind the company's low-key marketing approach was that it didn't want to overwhelm its existing backbone supplier, NTL – which provides the commercial high-speed Internet access that lies behind the services sold by Virgin Net.

NTL is a 49 per cent stakeholder in the ISP and has a contract with it until the end of 1999. In May, *The Obser er* reported that NTL was about to be dropped by Virgin, but both companies denied this. Virgin insists that it's looking for a second backbone supplier to complement the existing one.

Cable & Wireless has been mooted as the likely additional contract winner, but this is also being denied by Virgin. "We've been talking to quite a few companies, but there's no front runner," said Rauber.

The ISP plans to market its new service separately, using a different installation CD, but this will only happen when the new backbone provider is appointed.

www.virgin.net

www.ntl.co.uk

Nice work if you've the spine for it

OVERHEARD THIS MONTH
"Will the former Israeli Prime Minister be spending more time with the Net and Yahoo!?"
Letter from Simon Goodman to the *Guardian* on the subject of Benjamin Netanyahu.

Get on the Net in a Photo-me booth

No brown curtains and dodgy stools for new kiosks

You'll soon be able to pop into the nearest Photo-Me booth, check your email messages, have a few quick snaps taken, and send them as digital pictures via the Internet to a friend. Photo-Me is going online.

The plan is to convert most of the 4,300 booths in the UK, which can be found in stations, airports and shopping areas. By next year, around 1,000 of them will be converted into multimedia booths with Internet access.

The new booths will include normal screens and keypads, so you can send, retrieve and print emails, as well as access to the Net. You'll also be able to plug in your digital camera and print out your email or photos.

BT takes the credit for the idea of converting the photo-booths into a mutimedia product, and is an active partner in the new business venture. BT will run the online side of things, with email services provided by talk21.

You can read more about this initiative in our interview with John Swingewood, director of BT Internet Multimedia Services on page 20 of this issue.

There are 20,000 Photo-Me booths in the rest of the world, and the two partners are considering converting these in the future.

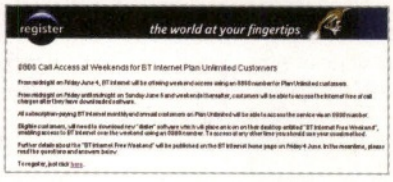
www.photo-me.co.uk

Smile! You're on candid Web camera...

NET ACCESS

BT joins 0800 access spree

BT is now offering free calls at weekends to subscribers of its BT Internet service. You'll be disconnected after two hours, but you can always reconnect to the service. BT Internet will charge you £11.95 a month for this. The free calls don't apply to ClickFree though, so will it have to change its name again?



This action was seen as an answer to the 6 June boycott by the Campaign for Unmetered Telecommunications. The protest went ahead, despite the cautious welcome that the organisation gave to the 0800 ISPs – it says these new providers aren't viable unless the telcos move to flat-rate, unmetered calls.

X-stream started the ball rolling by offering free calls via 0800 access on selected weekends. But the provider shows no signs of extending this service into peak periods.

Last month, Tempo launched its free Net access service between 6pm and 8am on weekdays, and all day at weekends via screaming.net. The only catch is that you have to transfer your line to LocalTel, which is offering a 10 per cent saving on BT's call costs.

Transcom offers access to its service via an 0800 number, but you have to pay a flat-rate monthly fee. This gives the ISP a revenue stream from day one.

It's rumoured that AOL and Compuserve are trialling 0800 numbers with a view to offering a free call subscription service for around £14.95 a month. But both companies have denied this.

Most of the free Net services in the UK are cagey about their figures. It's thought that Dixon's Freeserve (with about 1.5 million users) is now breaking even on the percentage it gets from BT for call charges.

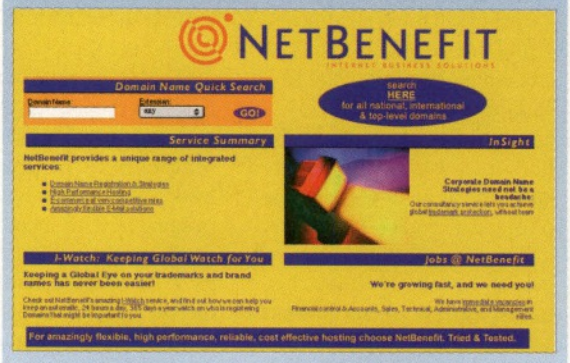
The bottom line is that BT can afford to offer free Internet access to its subscribers.

www.btinternet.com
www.x-stream.com
www.screaming.net

And the winner is... BT – again

News just in...

Redbus (www.redbus.com), the venture capital firm set up by Cliff Stanford, founder of Demon Internet (www.demon.net), ploughs money into movies on the Internet. Stanford believes that in 18 months time, people will begin to watch films on the Internet rather than TV... Record company Universal Music, more commonly known as **MCA** (www.mca.com), opts out of the Secure Digital Music Initiative (www.sdmi.org). The SDMI is trying to introduce technology to keep the lid on MP3 and other digital formats used to make illegal copies of music. Four companies have joined Universal to explore other ways to combat piracy – AT&T, Matsushita and BMG... The **FBI** site (www.fbi.gov) disappears from the Net – by strange coincidence, it happens shortly after the Bureau decide to raid the homes of a few well-known hackers. Sounds a bit like the time when the **CIA**'s site (www.cia.gov) suddenly showed the words 'Central *Stupidity* Agency'... Virgin Net (www.virgin.net) settles out of court with Adrian Paris, the ex-customer who used the network to send ProPhoto UK email spam. Mr Paris pays a modest amount in costs and damages, and promises not to do it again... **Irish Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern**, makes history with the first official Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) phone call from Ireland using **Interoute** (www.interoute.co.uk) technology... The big qualifications award body, **Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations** (www.ocr.org.uk) creates a vocational qualification in basic Internet use, called Internet Technologies Stage 1. Sounds like more credentials for the Net, then... **Netbenefit** (www.netbenefit.co.uk), the leading UK



register of Internet names, plans to go public on the Alternative Investments Market – part of the London Stock Exchange aimed at smaller businesses. The company has more than 17,000 names registered and hopes to raise £4.5 million... Without much of a fuss, **BT** puts its **phone book** on the Web at www.bt.com/phonenetuk... **Messagejet** (www.messagejet.com), the London-based service that forwards voicemail and faxes to email accounts, has a nasty accident and sends out massive emails to its customers containing the usernames, passwords and pin numbers of its other customers... And finally, a Web site service is set up by **Toplevel** (www.toplevel.co.uk) to help Government agencies get to grips with the fact that they'll be switching from paper-based to electronic red tape, sorry forms, in the year 2003. Talk about a learning curve...

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IM/FI

OVERHEARD THIS MONTH
"It was something about being in the right place at the right time with a good idea."
Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web, interviewed in *The Independent*.

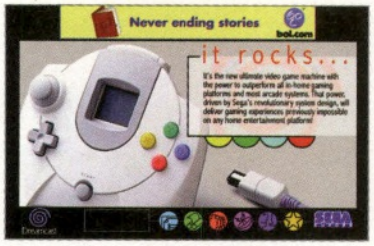
GAMES

Sega games machine features Web access

Dreamcast console includes modem and browser

SEGA's new games console, Dreamcast, will offer free Internet access. Working together with BT and ICL, SEGA will incorporate a 33.6k modem and browser into the Dreamcast console, which will be launched on 23 September at a price of £199.

Shoichiro Irimajiri, president of SEGA Enterprises, says: "We have already proven there is high consumer demand for this technology in Japan, where we have sold one million consoles in just four months".



BT will be responsible for the European network infrastructure, including dial-up and Internet access, local hosting and billing services. John Swingewood, director of BT Internet and multimedia, says: "One of our key objectives is to get more and more people online, and by working with SEGA to introduce simple, low-cost access on games consoles, we'll take another step towards achieving this".

The console will provide subscription-free access through televisions on a pay-as-you go basis throughout Europe, using BT's network of European partners. This is the first time this kind of access has been made available across Europe.

Dreamcast users with a phone line will be able to access the Internet via a local call and won't need to pay an access fee. Email and chat will be available and SEGA plans to offer online shopping and gaming facilities in the near future. A nanny programme to protect children from undesirable Internet content is also planned.

Tokyo-based SEGA Enterprises – a $3 billion company – will become the first global electronics supplier to become an Internet Service Provider. The European marketing budget for Dreamcast is expected to approach £100 million.

Dreamcast has at least four times the graphics processing power of the fastest Pentium II processor.

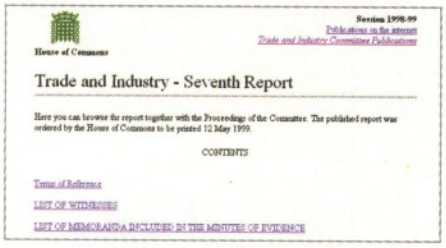
www.sega-europe.com

LEGAL

Encryption made legal in UK

The Government is to allow the use of encryption technologies that it formally opposed only two years ago.

As a result of a massive lobbying effort by an unusual combination of civil rights activists and heavy duty corporates, prime minister Tony Blair has made a dramatic u-turn.


Session 1998-99
Publications on the internet
Trade and Industry Committee Publications
House of Commons
Trade and Industry - Seventh Report
Here you can browse the report together with the Proceedings of the Committee. The published report was ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 12 May 1999.
CONTENTS
Terms of Reference
LIST OF WITNESSES
LIST OF MEMORANDA INCLUDED IN THE MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

The new initiative is to develop a combined industry and government forum on encryption issues, and a technical assistance centre will be set up to crack legally intercepted encrypted messages.

In the UK, the Net will be subject to the same laws as phone calls and surface mail. Digital messages and documents will only be retrievable from their owners using a warrant from a government official. The onus will be on the owner to provide the key. Failure to do so will be a crime, but penalties have not been decided yet.

Business needs encryption for information security, proof of origin, non-deniability and electronic contracts.

www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm/cmtrdind.htm

When money talks, governments walk

Trendspotting

Our survey says...

Survey results flood into the *Internet Magazine* offices daily, which is testimony to the frantic scramble for clues to the future of the wired economy. We all want to know as much as possible about our customers and fellow users, such as what they do and what they think.

It's led to a pretty eclectic mix this month and has earned this feature a new name. This is hardly a Research Focus (the old name for this column), but it's fascinating stuff.

MORI's UK survey for Intel discovered 47 per cent of Internet use was for educational and research purposes. News and information seeking came second at 32 per cent. Shopping only accounted for 10 per cent of time spent on the Web, but that figure is predicted to rise rapidly over the next year or so.

Of the non-users, 40 per cent said they would use the Internet if it was cheaper

A third of the Internet users surveyed said the Web is a good way of keeping in touch with family and friends, and a similar number said it was useful for helping kids with their homework.

When it comes to the biggest fears of using the Internet, downloading a virus is way ahead, with almost half of those surveyed citing this as their worst nightmare. Credit card fraud worries 39 per cent and this could be a major factor in the low number of shoppers. "I've looked for hi-fis, perfume, all sorts of things, but I've never actually put my credit card number into the computer," said one woman.

This fear will have to be addressed by the top UK companies, who expect 20 per cent of their sales to come directly from the Internet next year.

Of the non-users MORI spoke to, 40 per cent said they would go online if it was cheaper.

In the business world, 99 per cent of the large organisations surveyed for the latest report by Durlacher are now connected to the Internet, up from 94 per cent last year. But only 40 per cent of employees are able to enjoy Internet access at work, a figure that hasn't improved from last year.

The Government appears to have its work cut out. The e-government report, produced last month by Gallup, revealed that 88 per cent of those surveyed were unaware of the Government's plans to get all of its services online by 2008. Once this was explained to them, 69 per cent of respondents felt electronic services would improve the services they currently receive.

An online Government will give us easier access to better quality information

The major areas for improvement were expected to be easier access to government information (91 per cent), improved quality of government information (89 per cent), 24-hour access (86 per cent) and a single point of access (identified by 76 per cent of those surveyed).

It could be the general public who give the Government its biggest headache. It's fair to say that we'd all like to see greater openness from the authorities.

Despite this, 52 per cent of us say we don't want government departments to share our personal information, yet 59 per cent of us acknowledge that this would improve the service we receive.

Blimey, we're worse than the politicians!

E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial TM & © Universal Studios

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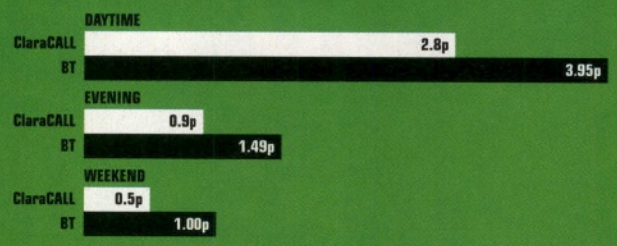

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Philip Gudgeon, Ripon

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OVERHEARD THIS MONTH
"Ninety per cent of Web sites could be shut down by a hacker within 10 minutes." **Ian McTaggart of Ciscom Systems.**

Calm down, calm down

Computer rage is on the increase, and that includes browser beating

Computer rage made the US headlines when a man from Washington State pulled out a gun and shot his PC to relieve his frustrations. We're a little less theatrical over here in the UK, but two new surveys show we're suffering too.

An NOP study (**www.nop.co.uk**) on behalf of Internet management company, intY (**www.inty.co.uk**), shows nearly half of those questioned believe computer crashes are responsible for deterioration in their relationships with colleagues. A similar proportion said technology failure makes them feel helpless and frustrated.

Two-thirds of respondents with email said they experienced difficulties in sending or retrieving mail, mostly due to outright crashes.

One in five people hold Bill Gates, head of Microsoft, personally responsible for computer technology failure. A similar number were suspicious of unspecific gremlins and nearly one in 10 people believe either God or aliens are to blame.

A separate study, conducted by MORI (**www.mori.com**) on behalf of Compaq, paints a similar dismal picture. Nearly half the respondents with their own PC at work have felt frustrated or stressed by the amount of time it takes to solve IT problems. Two in five said computer jargon makes it worse.

Four out of five respondents have seen colleagues vent frustration at their IT systems. Three-quarters of the survey, who suffer daily problems with their PCs, say their colleagues swear at their monitors out of frustration. A quarter of under 25 year olds have seen peers kicking their computers.

Here's our own top 10 causes of Internet rage

1. **ISP technical support people called Kevin.**
2. Another AOL disk in the mail.
3. **MTV Europe (old site).**
4. A 2Mb download that crashes with just 30k to go.
5. **Engaged technical support lines.**
6. Feeble background music.
7. **Page windows that pop up again when you try to close them.**
8. MTV Europe (new site).
9. **Sites that meddle with your Back button so it doesn't work properly.**
10. EVERYTHING IN CAPITALS.

INTERNET RIGHTS

Accessibility rules will help disabled visitors

In the US, the People with Disabilities Act makes it illegal for companies offering services over the Web to discriminate against disabled people, and the Disability Discrimination Act in the UK might have the same effect. Companies that provide inaccessible Web sites could be in as much trouble as shops that don't have space for wheelchairs.

The BBC has given us BETSIE – a way of displaying Web pages so that they can be 'read' by text-to-speech programs (**www.bbc.co.uk/education/betsie**) as a way around the problem, but the Web Consortium is going a lot further with its Web Accessibility Initiative (**www.w3.org/WAI**). This new recommendation is the start of a whole range of W3C documents on how to design accessible sites.

Underlying all of the documentation and recommendations and examples is a basic idea – the Web should be accessible to everyone.

AWARDS

Natural History Award

There's still time to submit your entry for the Jerwood Award, a multimedia design competition held in conjunction with the Natural History Museum and *Internet Magazine*.

Details of the competition and how to enter can be found on the Natural History Museum's excellent Web site (at **www.nhm.ac.uk**), which is well worth a visit.

SPEED

The need for speed

Almost half the people in a recent survey said the Internet is too slow and one in three wished they had a more powerful computer to view video and images.

One disgruntled user told researchers: "It takes me 15 minutes to download a five second video, which is ridiculous really."

The survey, conducted by MORI for processor manufacturer Intel, revealed that the number of people frustrated by the speed of the Internet is similar to the number worried about downloading a virus – 48 per cent.

Dave Hazell, director of Intel northern Europe, likened using a modern PC on the Internet with limited bandwidth to "driving a Ferrari down a dirt track".

"Affordable broadband services are not being offered to consumers, and until local telephone services are deregulated, users will be frustrated," said Hazell.

www.intel.com

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OVERHEARD THIS MONTH
"Please make sure that your call is important to us."
The on-hold message on Cable & Wireless's customer service line.

Timeline

July
The prospects for better mobile connectivity around the world improve with the completion of Vodafone's takeover of US cellular provider AirTouch this month. Now all you need is more money than sense and you can be online from anywhere.
www.vodafone.com

BANKING INDUSTRY TECHNOLOGY SECRETARIAT

July
Are you worried about security? So are the banks – though few will admit it. In the US, the major banks have opened a new computer testing lab to look at the security of Web browser and PC hardware for home banking transactions. It'll be run by the Banking Industry Technology Secretariat – we hope UK banks listen to its findings.
www.bitsinfo.org

SIMPLY EXPO

20 July
The iMac notebook will be launched at MacWorld Expo, which starts today. Look out for the coolest laptop in the business.
www.macworldexpo.com/mwny99/index.html

Late July
You can forget university and tuition fees – the future of education is online if Lotus is to be believed. Desperate to prove it can do more than Notes, it's launching its CoursePak Provider Network to give access to online training and courseware using its LearningSpace software.
www.lotus.com/home.nsf/tabs/learnspace

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www.cyberia.net

Networks Telecom 99
Billed as the UK's premier voice and data networking show, this event will cost you £20 on the door, but it's free if you make a booking on the Internet.
29 June-1 July
NEC, Birmingham
(01203) 426 479
www.networks-telecom.com

Computer Telephony Expo 99
If you're interested in computer telephony, this is the show for you.
29 June-1 July
NEC, Birmingham
(01203) 426 478
www.ctexpo.co.uk

Application Development 99
This event aims to provide an insight into emerging technologies on the Net– and so it should in six days!
5-9 July
Westminster, London
pietror@cit.uk.com
(01280) 821 400
www.application development.com

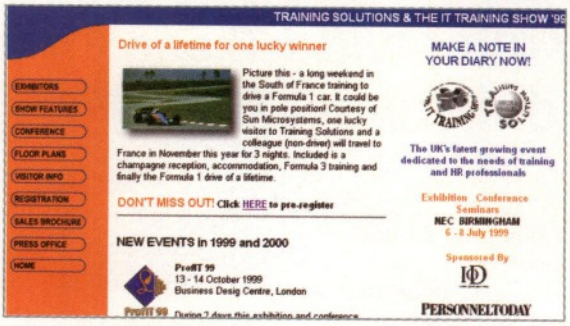
The IT Training Show
If you have anything to do with the provision or buying of IT training, this exhibition should act as the hub for your activities. And it's free.
5-9 July
NEC, Birmingham
(0171) 973 6401
www.training-shows.co.uk

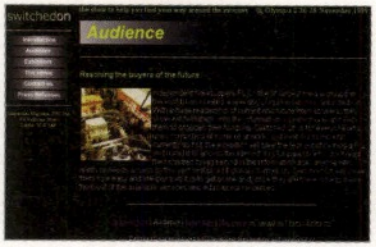
The Internet explored
How do you get the best from the Net? This one-day course will fill you in for £170.38.
6 July

FrontPage 98
A comprehensive course about putting together Web pages using this popular design tool. £287.88 gets you onto this training course.
8 July

Marketing on the Internet – an overview
Get e-commerce explained to you for £346.63.
13 July

Promoting your Web site online
£346.63 will buy you the information you need to get your site listed on search engines and generally spread about the Web.
14 July





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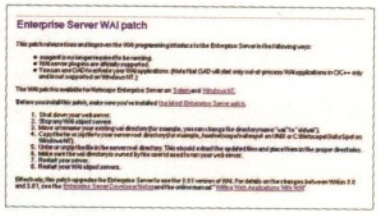
Switched On
Switched On is a consumer exhibition aimed at everyone who uses computers or is thinking of starting. The organisers say the exhibition will take the 'fear' out of owning a PC and using it to access the Internet.
16-18 July
Olympia, London
(0171) 323 4502
www.switched-on.org

Internet and Intranet security
Get to grips with Net security and find out how to defend against unscrupulous computer users. For £1286.63 you'll get the low-down on all this, plus encryption and authentication.
21-23 July
Holborn London
(01285) 655 888
www.qatraining.com

Bug of the Month: Scripting languages

A lot of Web sites use scripts instead of compiled programs to generate dynamic pages, access databases and complete other useful tasks.



Scripting languages, such as Perl, are useful because they're fast to write, easy to update and they generally run fast enough to meet most people's needs.

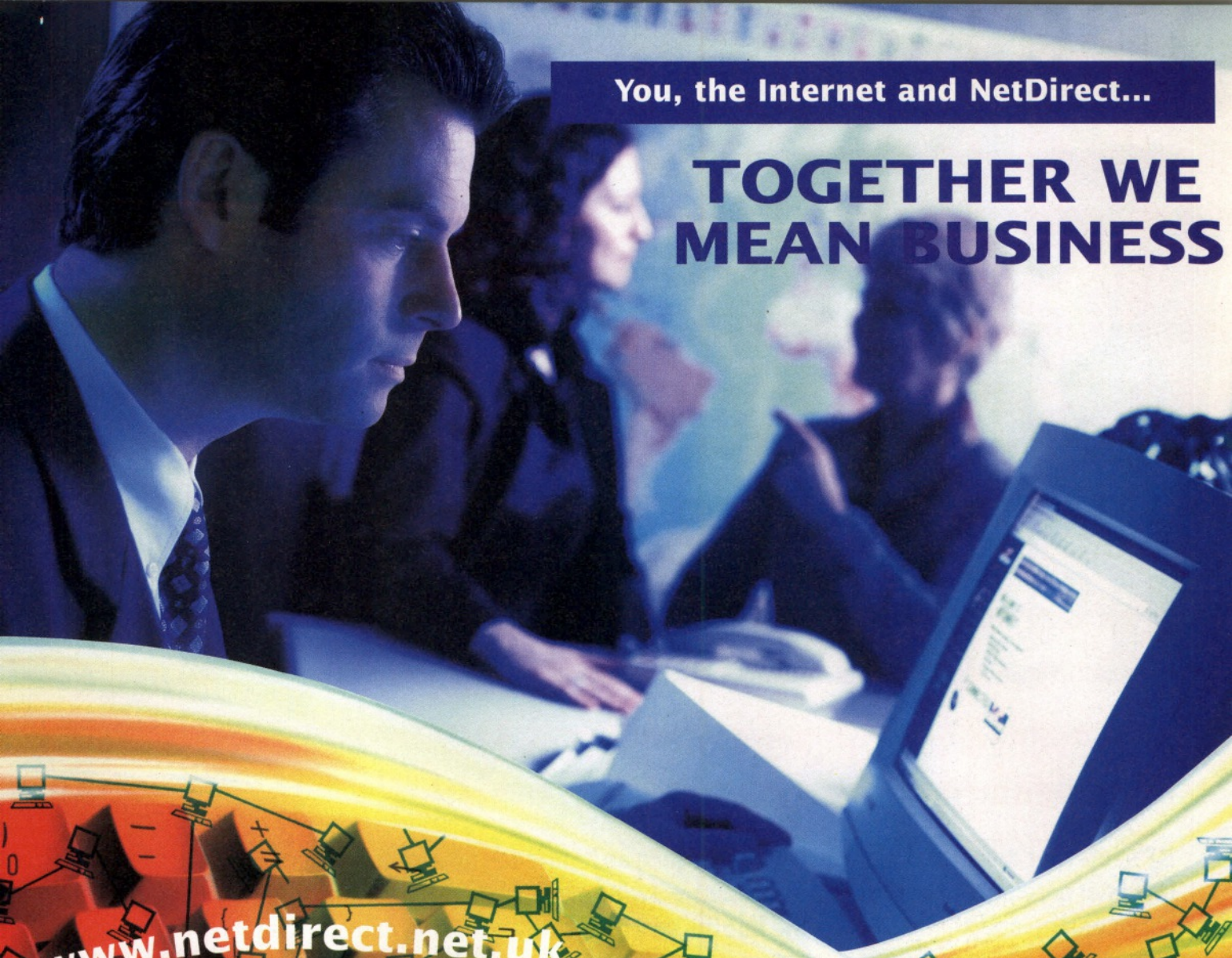
Unfortunately, they're also a big potential security hole, as Netscape has discovered. It's had to admit that it's Windows NT Enterprise server has an unfortunate bug in it (you can get more details from **http://help.netscape.com/products/server/enterprise/P186244-readme.html**). If you send the server a URL for a script and add '%20' to the end, it'll send you the source code instead of running the script and sending you the results.

This will worry systems administrators who embed user names, passwords, internal network details and IP addresses into scripts.

A Perl routine that opens a database and adds some records to it needs to know the user name, password and table name for the database. So now your friendly neighbourhood hacker could know it too.

This is yet another example of the unexpected consequences which the Web creates. And it'll be the companies who've decided to take the Internet seriously – those offering transactional services, e-commerce and extranets – that are most exposed.

There's a patch for the problem (at **http://help.netscape.com/business/filelib.html#20**), but the security isn't being designed into the main Web tools from the beginning. This means that new products create a new list of bugs, holes and problems every month.



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For business the Internet means, what was once an interesting possibility is now a competitive necessity, and is becoming essential for small, medium and large organisations alike.

Because ISPs are crucial to the success and effectiveness of Internet access and because different businesses have different requirements, choosing the right service provider is vital.

There are a number of Internet Service Providers in the UK, but very few have the proven expertise and experience that is needed to give your business the support it needs - NetDirect is one of the few.

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It's good to talk

John Swingewood, director of BT Internet Multimedia Services

BT's Internet division is growing in importance as it pursues new ventures and levels of service. Steve Patient talks to John Swingewood about BT's Internet services, the new digital Photo-Me booths and lowering the cost of call charges

When John Swingewood grabbed me on the way to his office, he was scattering enthusiasm like confetti. He comes across as the kind of guy you'd find having a loud but interesting conversation at a party. He was even more excited than usual because IMS had that day launched its digital Photo-Me booth, complete with Net access and the ability to upload captured images.

The launch is typical of the IMS division since Swingewood took over. It's growing in importance as BT forges ahead with ADSL services, free Europe-wide Net access – via Sega's Dreamcast console and its Click service – and interactive satellite TV. It's also getting into the Net portal business and cementing more links with content providers.

We sit informally across a corner of a large table that Swingewood uses as a desk and he calls for tea. We start with the Photo-Me booths.

Can you upload the photo booth pictures straight onto your Web site?
Yes, but the ability to email a picture of yourself will probably do what you want. We also give you the ability to create an instant Web site, perhaps just as a fun thing – a Web site for a month. On the serious side, it's aimed at the professional on the move who can pick up and send email from the booth and browse the Net.

It's a miniature Internet café, then?
That's probably a good definition. You can still get simple passport photos, but we can do a lot more using digital imaging and combine it with the Internet.

You started your working life on the technical side?
Yes, but I like to think of myself more as an entrepreneur than a technologist.

Were you attracted to communications by the technology or the way it enabled people?
Enabling, yes. The services I can give to consumers and corporates. The way I can make a difference to people is to provide services. I don't really care about the underlying technology, as long as it's cost effective. I have this thing about information, and the Internet is about information. It can be entertaining and it can be informing, but sometimes it's neither. Can I get information to people on any device, on any bandwidth and anywhere?

Do you want to see everything connected to everything else?
Yes, but it must be appropriate information for the device. For instance, on my PC I want lots of data, but on my mobile, only two things really interest me – my stock price and the weather. I want intelligence in the system, so appropriate information is delivered to each device in an appropriate way.

What's BT Internet's relationship to BT? Is it a BT division?
My division has a lot of products. One of them is BT Internet. Unusually, these days, it's a subscription Internet service.

You're not dropping the charges?
No, the other product, BT ClickFree is free. But we still have a subscription product which is a premium service.

And LineOne?
LineOne is a joint venture with United News and Media, and that's free ➢

Photography by Frank Rodgers

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"When BT first got into the Internet access market, its Internet consumer products were dire."

now. BT Internet positions itself as a professional Internet service. For instance, every subscriber on BT Internet gets digital certificates included in the price, so the security level is higher than other ISP services.

BT used to say that BT Click+ had no reason to go free, but it has done. Why won't BT Internet do the same?
I think you'll see alternative pricing propositions, but there's a need in the market for a paid service. At one end of the market are the free services, but at the other end, people require a premium professional service. There's room for both of them.

How many users are there on ClickFree?
It's hard to measure because there's no registration process, but it's in excess of half a million.

Will more ISPs adopt ClickFree?
ClickFree has done well. There's been a change in the market, with retailers launching their own Internet access products based on ClickFree. There's Tesco, HMV, Yahoo!/Waterstones, MSN and WHSmith. And a couple of other big ones, including Barclays Bank, will appear over the next few weeks. They all think they need to create electronic channels to their consumer base.

When BT first got into the Internet access market, its Internet consumer products were dire. They were slammed.

I think we've started to establish a leadership position over the last six months. We have an aggressively priced product with ClickFree, and this is teamed with quality of service. We have a commitment never to give an engaged tone.

ClickFree is a neat example of leveraging your basic business. Wouldn't it be difficult for another company to do this without control of the system?
No, there are others who could do that deal. We bought 50 per cent of Excite UK as recognition that we needed to get into portal play with a known Internet brand, because subscriptions would disappear and we'd start to rely much more on advertising and transactional revenue.

But as part of BT, you make money on the call anyway, don't you?
As a service provider, I have to trade at arm's length within the company, so I'm at no advantage.

Isn't that just an organisational issue?
No, it's a regulatory requirement. There is an absolute accounting separation between our businesses. Any other service provider can trade with BT in the same way. I don't have any advantage.

Has anyone tried?
Yahoo! is out there with the same product and it's making money. Think about all those companies who've taken the rebrand. Sega has taken ClickFree across the whole of Europe. I would argue that they're already out there.

Do you think this setup will last?
I think so. A new model has emerged. If you stimulate telephony and Net traffic, by issuing discs and developing the market, you can share in the revenues.

BT's network is still geared for short voice calls. Can it deal with a massive increase in people spending time online?
If the telco providing the ISP service has enough interconnect points with BT, there wouldn't be a problem. Many of them have only one interconnect point. Under certain circumstances, there could be some congestion.

So a modern exchange can handle this new level of demand?
Well, there's always a contention ratio in there, but I don't think the Internet is seeing the contention ratio. I'm sure it's happened in some rare circumstances.

Your division, although separate from BT itself, must be making a massive contribution?
Well. yes. Just last week we announced that 18 per cent of the total call minutes on the telephony network is Internet traffic.

Do you, as a division, lobby BT on pricing issues to favour Internet users and your side of the business?
I think we do. We argue for the kind of pricing we want. You have to recognise that I'm also in BT. In the US model you pay a subscription and you don't pay for local calls. As the US moves into the DSL world, it'll pay a much higher flat fee. We don't have that model in Europe. We've moved to free ISPs and you pay for the phone call. If you look at the average time spent online in the UK, the overall cost doesn't work out much different from the US model.

Does IMS want to see lower costs to customers in order to expand its Net services?
There are people launching essentially flat top services. Some of them use an 0800 type service with heavy advertising. I think you'll see a merge of some kind of subscription and 0800 type service. I'm not reliant on telephony revenues to make money. I make money out of content and applications, which is where my interests lie.

But how can people use the enabling technology of the Internet if they can't afford it?
You're talking about a penny per minute retail price. If you apply your best Friends and Family discounts, you can get 0.7 pence a minute, 42p per hour. I don't think this is expensive.

This is close to my heart – I pay £300 a quarter in Net call charges.
Where do you live?

Wiltshire, not Abyssinia
That's a shame – I was going to say if it

was in the Ealing area you could have an ADSL line at £30 a month and use it as much as you like.

So what's happening with ADSL?
I'm an ADSL trialist. We have about 900 users. Because it's a trial we're asking people to do a lot of analysis. We've gone media-rich, with video content from Flextech, Sky and others – and people love it. We're still in the trial phase, but we'll make announcements when it finishes. At the moment it's scheduled to run until September.

But clearly, if someone can buy ADSL, they won't buy a less flexible leased line unless the price comes down.
That's exactly what we've been trialling. It's not just about fast browsing, it's about trialling installation, skill sets, configuration – the whole lot. Part of that is working with media companies to see how we can take their content to make it a really compelling experience.

Do you see BT or IMS getting into the content business?
I don't think I'd say content provision. We bought into Excite, which is a content portal. When we did interactive TV, we partnered with BSkyB. When we want to do content things, we'll do it through partnerships. Sometimes, when we see an unaddressed niche market, we might start it off. For instance, our educational area content has merged with Anglia Multimedia as a joint venture called Anglia Campus. We will do this kind of stuff, but it isn't our role. Where we've built a platform enabling others to aggregate their content and deliver it to consumers in the home, we'll be involved, but only in that aggregation-type role.

BT won't just roll out the infrastructure and invite people to use it then.
We'll play a fuller part than we've done with BSkyB, LineOne and other joint ventures. For example, we've made an investment in a company called Fantastic Corporation. They're a broadband push technology company with content as well.

IMS relies on BT being a big player. Are you threatened by BT losing its positions as the largest telco in the UK?
My role is Internet multimedia, and I'm focused on that. In my area of responsibility we've established a leading position. Fantastic, MSN, Sega, Yahoo! – it goes on and on. All of those deals are done. It's an impressive portfolio of relationships.

When BT was a publicly-owned monopoly, it saw customers as a resource. Do you think that mentality has changed?
Of course it has. BT is at the forefront of the Internet, using leading technology, and it has a passion for customer service.

BT reluctantly went to per second pricing, but kept its 5p setup charge. The actual cost of setting up a call is around 1/50,000 of a penny. Is this customer oriented?
Two things in response to that. I'm an Internet service provider, and as such I have to operate like any other ISP under BT's call pricing strategy. It continues to review its prices, but that's what those prices are today. Secondly, Click doesn't experience dropped and lost connections that mean you're paying for the setup. Perhaps the problem is with the quality of the other underlying service providers? After all, the tests in *Internet Magazine* gave us 100 per cent reliability.

But without that 5p charge, you could use your dial-up connection far more flexibly.
The telephone tariff is where it is. We have the ADSL trial which is currently a £30 flat top fee, and if BT does roll it out, that'll sell at a flat top fee. To be honest, you're the only person who's ever raised the setup fee with me. The average time online across our products is 22 minutes, so we don't consider the setup charge to be an issue.

The way people use services is partly determined by the way they're charged for them. Surely dial-up would be more useful if there was genuine per second pricing?
I accept that. Pricing is under continual review, but it's not within my remit. We make continuous suggestions about how pricing can benefit the Internet user, but we are where we are.

Is dropping the setup charge one of those suggestions?
It's not one I'd put at the top of my list to be honest with you.

Curriculum Vitae

- John Swingewood gained a first-class honours degree in electronics at Surrey University
- Having joined BT in the 1980s, he helped launch the experimental X25 data service and was involved in the company's development of network and service management standards and tools
- In 1991 he joined the Broadcast Services division of BT, becoming general manager in 1993
- He has been director of BT's Internet Multimedia Services division for two years
- He holds four directorships in BT joint ventures – British Interactive Broadcasting, with BSkyB, Midland and Matsushita; LineOne, with United News and Media; Anglia Campus, with Anglia Multimedia, and Vio Worldwide with Scitex Corp. He's also chairman of Excite UK.

Microsoft's Steve Ballmer, when asked how much software business Microsoft wanted, said, "All of it". How much of the Internet business does BT want?
I'll answer that slightly differently. I want to encourage everyone in the UK to get online and get an email address. Some of the initiative we've done with payphones and with the new kiosks is to say, OK, you might not have a PC at home, but you can still send email and have a Web site. If we get everyone online, we'll get a market share that reflects the quality of our service and the richness of our content.

"BT is at the forefront of the Internet, using leading technology, and it has a passion for customer service."

Would you like people to stay online longer? Are you a man on a mission? Do you see the Internet as a Good Thing?
Absolutely.

So anything that limits their access is a bad thing?
I wouldn't put it in those terms. I want to make it widely available and a rich experience, but people should do other things in their life as well.

True enough. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us. im

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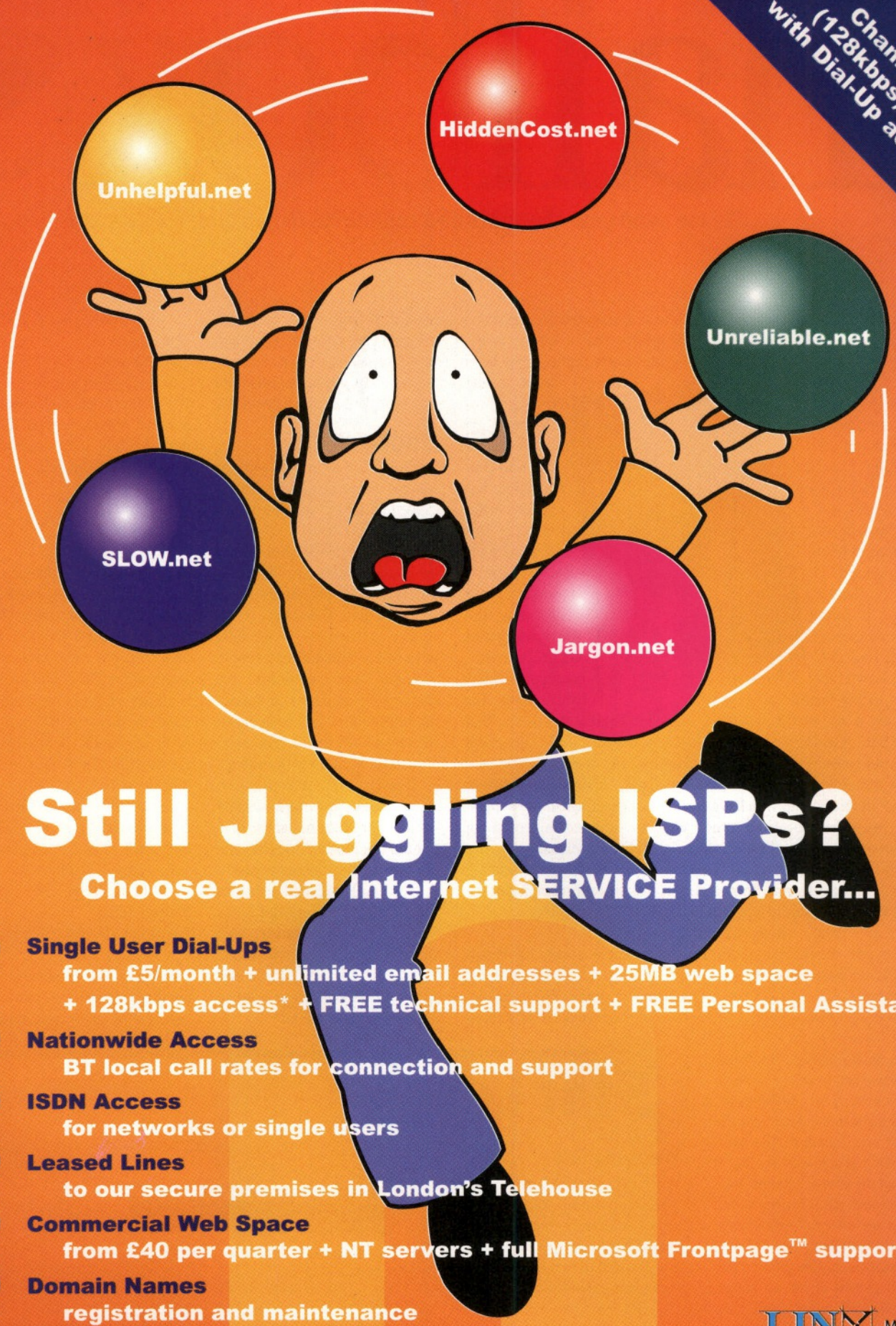

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Get it right

In your article on Web cams last month, Roger Gann states: "The world's first Web cam was made at Cambridge University in 1991, predating the Internet by some years."

So when was the Internet actually founded? I know there's much dispute about what we call the Internet and how it relates to the historic networks on which it was based (such as ARPANET, MILNET and NFSNET), but considering the Internet Architecture Board was formed in 1983, and by 1989 many people were using the Internet on a daily basis, I would question Roger's statement – unless he was referring to the World Wide Web. Surely *Internet Magazine* can distinguish between the Internet and the World Wide Web.

Ian Porteous
Ian@thornlea.force9.co.uk

Martyn Moore replies: Yes, Roger was indeed referring to the World Wide Web. Sorry for any confusion, Ian. For the record, I don't think the Internet was 'founded'. The Inter-Networking group was set up in 1972, but the phrase 'Internet' wasn't used until 1982. History lesson over – I prefer W3C's definition of the World Wide Web: "The universe of network-accessible information, an embodiment of human knowledge". Far more touchy-feely.

Access numbers

The monthly Internet results tables published by *Internet Magazine* are a valuable source of information for customers and the industry.

Unfortunately, Demon Internet's results in recent issues have not reflected the high level of service that it offers, as the wrong access number has been used in the testing procedure.

We appreciate that your magazine has acted to withdraw this month's results for Demon Internet, but we regret that the previous results might have discouraged readers from using the service. There's no doubt that independent and impartial reviews are of great value, and we look forward to future results, reflecting the true quality and continued improvement of the Demon service.

David Furniss, director of Internet Services for Scottish Telecom
d.furniss@demon.net

Martyn Moore replies: ISP details change all the time so some will slip through the net. ISPs must contact our technology editor, Andrew Starling, if their details or access numbers have changed. Email him at **andrews@internet.emap.com**. We can't print any more letters like this, so make sure you tell Andrew.

Snobs unite

I would like to counter editor Martyn Moore's tirade against "Internet snobs" in his column from the May issue.

I believe all Web sites should be made available to 286 computers, and if that makes me a snob, I'm glad to be one.

The Internet, originally intended as a beautifully simple concept and medium for exchanging messages and finding information, has been taken over by whizzy media types who are cluttering it up with rubbish.

If people want to waste their time concocting fantastically useless JavaScripts, that's fine, but not if it means snobs like me are increasingly denied access.

The hardware and software requirements are ludicrous these days – WH Smith's free Internet service needs Windows 9x/NT, 100Mb of disk space and 16Mb of RAM – just to send an email? Do me a favour!

Snobs unite, long live the courier font.

Peter Simpson
psimpson@bma.org.uk

PS: If there are still any commercial providers who offer a dial-up Unix shell account, I'd love to hear from you.

Screaming northerner

Every magazine is raving about how great screaming.net is with its free Internet access and free phone calls. And yes, it's a good deal – as long as you live in the south of England. The problem is, to get on screaming.net, you need to pick up the software from a branch of Tempo, but the most northern shop it has is in Leicester.

Hopefully, other ISPs will soon offer this sort of package, but until then, screaming.net will just strengthen the north/south divide in England.

Stewart Souter
stewart.souter@currantbun.com

Technology editor Andrew Starling replies: screaming.net told us it's now offering online registration at

Star Letter

Worrying find

During a search, I came across a page containing over 16,000 email addresses at the Jayde search engine (**www.jayde.com**). I presumed the engine was collecting the email addresses during the URL submission procedure.

It troubles me that a popular service like Jayde could be so lax about the user information it collects. A spammer could download the email addresses using an address harvester and send spam to thousands of people in the list, causing much annoyance.

I asked Jayde how it secures this type of information, and it replied: "There's no way an outside party can access the data from this database."

I was shocked at this, as I was able to download all 16,341 email addresses with the click of a button. As a webmaster, I've always made every effort to protect the information that I collect about my visitors.

If I can do it easily, with no budget whatsoever, surely a search engine shouldn't have any problems keeping details safe.

A quick tip – to stop email harvesters from collecting your email address from newsgroups and Web pages, visit my friend's site, SpamBot, at **www.spambot.com**.

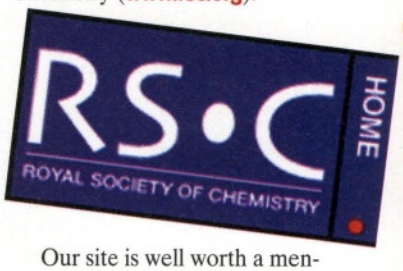
Adam Burton
adam@adamburton.com

www.tempo.co.uk. You can also phone Localtel on 0800 376 5262 for the connection CD. So it's not that grim up north.

Lime or limelight?

In April's issue of *Internet Magazine*, you gave the URL of the Royal Shakespeare Company as www.rsc.org.uk.

This caused me some consternation, as it's very close to the URL of the organisation I work for–the Royal Society of Chemistry (www.rsc.org).



Our site is well worth a mention, as it includes such gems as interactive spectra and 3D molecules. It also links to chemsoc, the chemistry societies' network, containing the beautiful Visual Elements, a new periodic table that's well worth a look (http://chemsoc.org/viselements/index.htm).

Dr Robin Forder
ForderR@rsc.org

Registering program

I thought your readers might be interested in a free program that I've discovered. It submits sites to multiple search engines. DumpTruck is available as a download from http://members.aol.com/dumptruck.

Simply enter details of the URLs you wish to submit and the program registers them with 12 major search engines (you can add more). It produces a report if any of the submissions fail. I have no connection with the author – I just think it's a great, timesaving program.

James Rye
jrye@writeme.com

Numbers game

The cost of my dial-up connection with BT Internet has effectively risen five per cent overnight, simply because it's changed the number.

Until 1 May this year, the main BT Internet dial-up number for London was an 0171 code. Small businesses were able to place this number on their Key Contact number list (the business equivalent of BT Friends and Family). This provided a 10 per cent discount on all calls to that number.

But after this date, BT Internet changed its dial-up to an 0845 number, which cannot be registered as a Key Contact number, so it's only eligible for a five per cent discount. This means an increase in our bill of around £12 per quarter.

This change applies to both the business Key numbers scheme and the domestic Friends and Family scheme.

Craig Pickup
c.pickup@digitrade.co.uk

Martyn Moore replies: It's worse than that Craig. The effective price rise, as you describe it, is five and a half per cent. We tried right up to our press deadline to get someone from BT to comment, but nobody got back to us.

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Short arm of the law

Following the publication of a list of MI6 agents on the Web, Richard Dinnick argues that, no matter how hard the authorities might try, they'll never police the Internet

The Internet cannot be policed. I realised this after Richard Tomlinson published the names of MI6 agents on a Web site. MI6 had every right to demand the removal of this information. And GeoCities, the online community on which the site was hosted, was right to comply with that request. People were in danger, and Tomlinson's actions had a breathtaking disregard for human life.

But then came the mirror sites, which also published the names of the MI6 agents. I had a call from the *Daily Express* saying one of the editors was offering a massive lunch as reward for anyone who could hunt down one of these elusive sites. But what would a national paper want with the information, anyway?

Purely for the purposes of this piece, I searched every engine and community known to me using the words Tomlinson, MI6 and agents, but to no avail.

Ironically, the identities of the agents were protected by the Secret Service's greatest asset – James Bond. Every search I made resulted in hundreds of Sean Connery, Roger Moore, Timothy Dalton and Pierce Brosnan tribute sites (I'm afraid George Lazenby was distinctly unrepresented).

The BBC found one of the mirror sites, but only after two days of searching. This started me thinking about the resources needed to police the Net. If the BBC – with its fairly impressive resources – needed 48 hours to track down just one site, what would be the logistics of an official body (Ofnet, perhaps) or Internet police force? And they would only have UK jurisdiction.

"A United Nations Internet Taskforce, drawn from every nation, could act as guardians of the Net."

In this case, the UK had a legitimate case against one of its own agents, so this would be covered under the the equivalent of British airspace on the Net. But what about the people who copied the information on mirror sites? Should they be punished? And if so, by whom? And how?

The Web doesn't lend itself to this idea of virtual airspace, so what we'd need is legislation on a global scale. And the only candidate the majority of countries would be comfortable with would be the UN. A United Nations Internet Taskforce, drawn from every nation, could act as guardians of the Net.

But the UN is already terminally short of cash. How could such a massive project be funded? Perhaps one per cent of every call to the Net could be skimmed off as a Net tax to pay for the equipment and staff needed.

But again there are flaws. Let's say an unscrupulous delegate gets an alert saying a bloke called Tomlinson has put up a list of MI6 agents on the Web. He or she is made responsible for removing the site and its mirrors. Even if the sites were removed, what happens to the information? What if our unscrupulous delegate made a copy and sold it to highest bidder?

Logistics and price aside, perhaps the biggest issue is not whether the Net can be policed, but whether it should be policed. Would it be morally right? Surely this is a case of shooting the messenger. And, despite the public outcry concerning the Net, can a bunch of computers strung together really be more evil than the governments and organisations that drop bombs or go on ethnic cleansing sprees?

Knowledge is power. Everyone with a connection to the Web has access to the world's knowledge. It would be a cheaper and easier solution to regulation to get everyone in the world online. In this utopia, mankind will all be equally empowered, and better understanding will result.

And with the ink on the Freedom of Information act barely dry, who knows – there might no longer be a need for spies, or the knowledge police.

Richard Dinnick is the site reviews editor of Internet Magazine. He can be contacted at richardd@internet.emap.com

Home sweet home page

The best home pages are a combination of original ideas, interesting content and good design. Gail Robinson looks at some of the most innovative sites on the Web and talks to the designers to find out what makes their pages click

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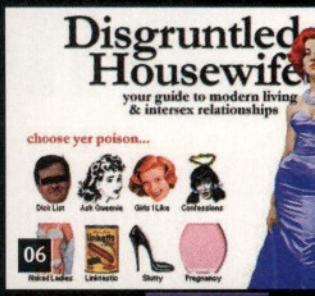

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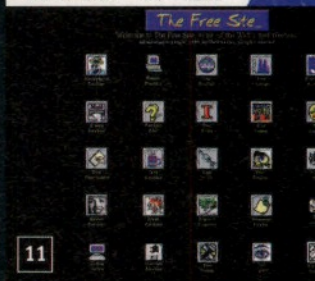

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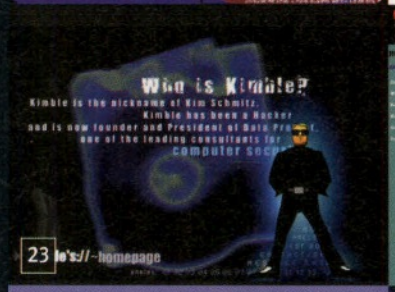

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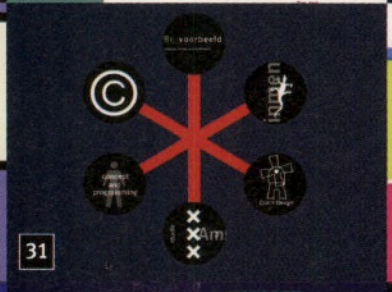
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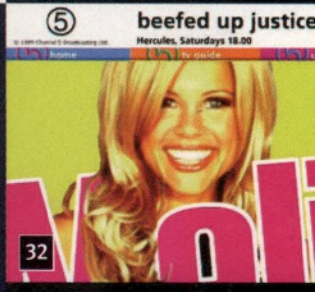

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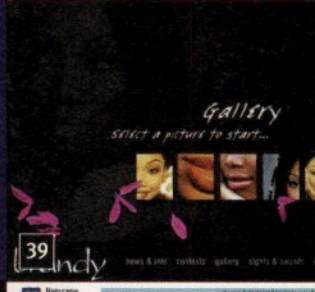

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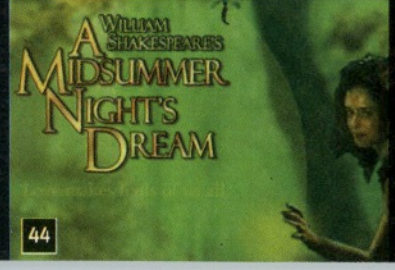

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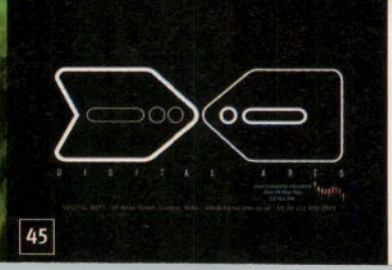

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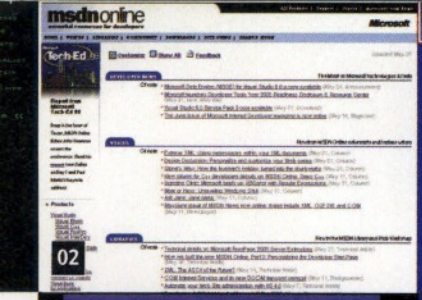
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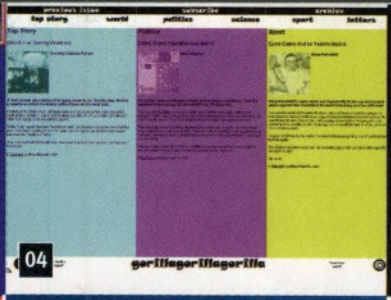
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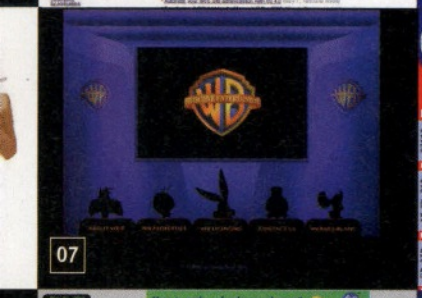
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www.inconstantmoon.com
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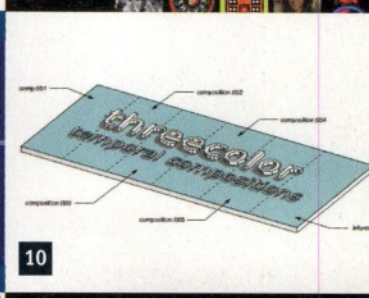
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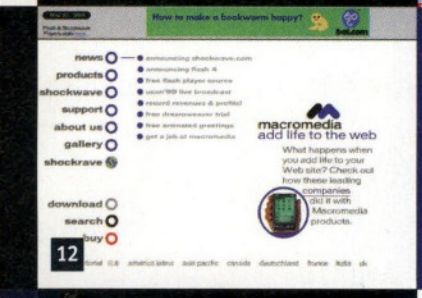
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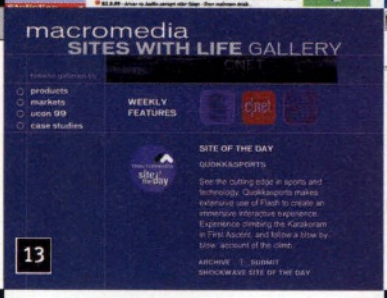
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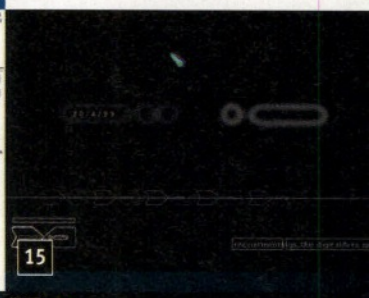
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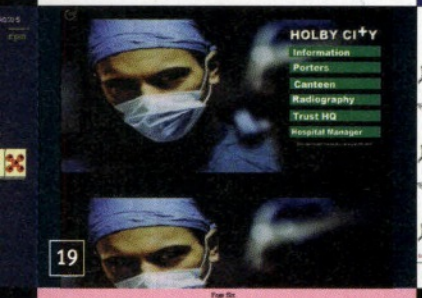
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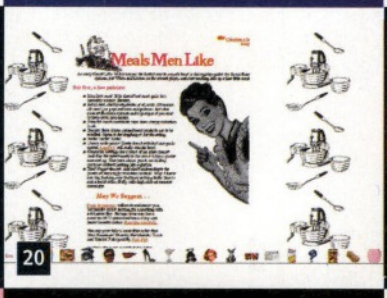
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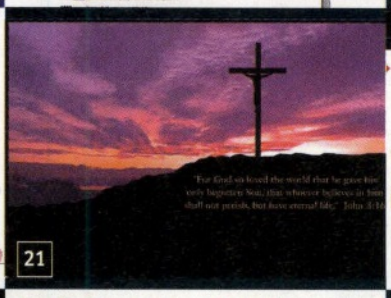
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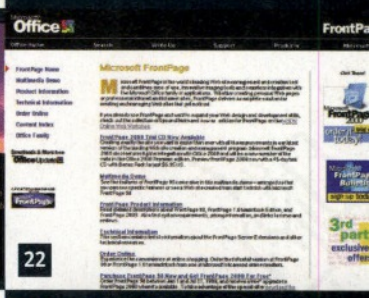
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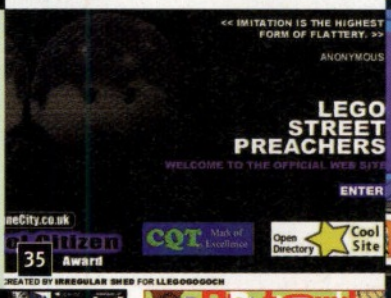
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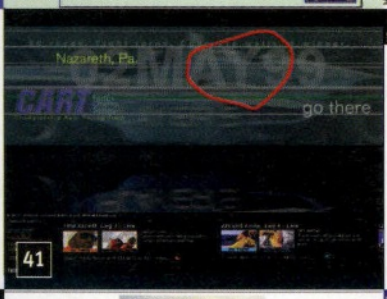
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Ask Queenie
Dear Queenie,
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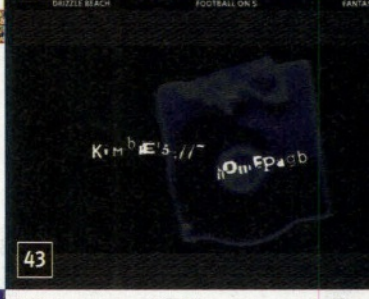
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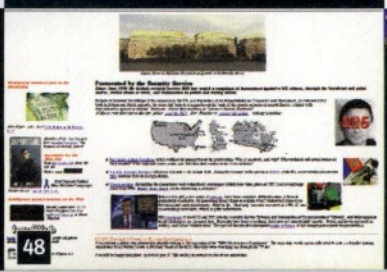
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Is this a wind-up duck
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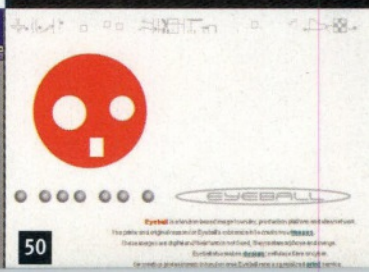
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Magic EBasic £40pa

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Price excludes naming authority fees

Magic EPlus £75pa

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- 10 POP Email boxes
- Remote control panel via web interface
- Multiple Email routing

Price excludes naming authority fees

Magic SoHo £130pa

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- Single Email routing
- Full FTP access and personal CGI-BIN
- Remote control panel via web interface
- Full graphical site statistics

Price excludes naming authority fees

Magic Standard £155pa

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- Unlimited Email addresses
- 10 POP Email boxes
- Multiple Email routing
- Full FTP access and personal CGI-BIN
- Remote control panel via web interface
- Full graphical site statistics

Price excludes naming authority fees

Magic from the Heart £195pa

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- Full FTP access and personal CGI-BIN
- Remote control panel via web interface
- Full graphical site statistics

Price excludes naming authority fees
£10 from this package is contributed to charitable causes
Details: http://www.magic-moments.com/charity/

Magic Enterprise £255pa

- 100 MB Web/hosting space
- Unlimited Email addresses
- 20 POP Email boxes
- Multiple Email routing
- Unlimited Email autoresponders
- SSL secure server
- Full FTP access and personal CGI-BIN
- Remote control panel via web interface
- Full graphical site statistics

Price excludes naming authority fees

No hidden set up charges!

Other Services

Additional web/hosting space (5MB)	£25 pa
Additional 5 POP Email Box	£65 pa
Web Forwarding (Email packages only)	£25 pa
Unlimited Email autoresponders*	£55 pa
Mail List Facilities*	£99 pa
Database Facilities	from £200 pa
Filemaker Pro database hosting	from £200 pa
SSL secure server*	from £35 pa
Frontpage extensions (web hosting packages only)	£50 pa
Shopping cart systems	from £200 pa
Server Co location (from 64Kbps)*	from £3600 pa

*Set up charges

Naming Authority Fees

UK domains (.co.uk, .org.uk)	£20
Global domains (.com, .org, .net)	£45
Austria domains (.at)	£100
Bahamas domain (.bs)	£80
Belgium domain (.be)	£100
France domain (.fr)	£360
Germany domain (.de)	£165
Holland domain (.nl)	£45
Ireland domain (.ie)	£95
Libya domain (.ly)	£80
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There are some fabulous personal Web sites in the UK – sites that inspire us to take that HTML editor in hand and stake our own claim on the Web. But where do you begin? The first rule of a good home page is that content is king, and if you're going to all the trouble of building a site, you'd better make sure you've got something to say to the world.

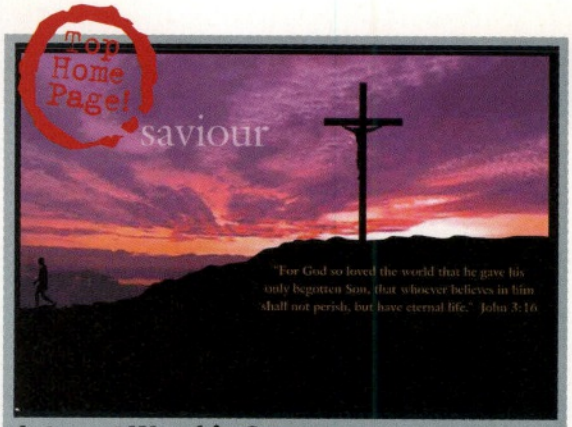
John Lundberg knows all about award-winning home pages – his Circlemakers site (**www.circlemakers.com**) won Best Personal Web site award at last year's Yell Awards, along with *The Guardian's* Site of the Year for 1998. His site is devoted to the undercover world of crop circle makers.

If there's a gap in the market – fill it

It's beautifully designed, regularly updated with well-written content and well deserving of its awards – in short, it's a God among home pages. John puts the site's success down to its content: "It contains content that can't be found elsewhere on the Web, and the site also has an edge because what we do is illegal. The Hampshire Farmer's Union currently has a £2,000 award out for our arrest".

Improve other home pages

Conspiracy Net (at **www.conspiracy-net.com**) plugs into one of the favourite preoccupations of many Internet users – conspiracy theories. And although the design is not stunning, the content is good – over 700 categorised conspiracy-related articles. Jason Goodman is responsible for the site and he told us the idea came about after watching the Mel Gibson film, *Conspiracy Theory*. "We looked at other conspiracy sites and decided we could do better," says Jason.



Internet Worship Centre

www.ministry1.freeserve.co.uk

This is a real work of faith – the faith of one Abraham Payne. This is a veritable host of Christian resources aimed at inspiring your faith. You can join others from around the world at the Internet Worship Centre in a healing service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Before you do that, though, have a look at the impressive – if slightly dodgy – animation of the crucifiction entitled 'The love of Christ in action'.

Turn your obsession into a Web site

Some of the best home pages have been inspired by people's hobbies or, more accurately, people's fanaticism. One of the best examples of this is Chris Parry's Arsenal World (at **www.arsenal-world.com**). He's been an Arsenal fan all his life, developing the Web site last year as "a tribute to the team, and to provide others with something interesting to look at". Chris acknowledges the importance of content: "It's always up to date and includes many original articles that don't appear elsewhere. Oh, and Arsenal are also a superb football team".

Drink – if it helps

Of course there's always the 'think of an idea while you're really drunk and see if it still sounds any good when you're sober approach'. This is how Steve Anderson came up with the fabulous Lego Street Preachers site (at **http://lsp.fortunecity.co.uk**).

Scenes from the life of the Manic Street Preachers are recreated in Lego. "It's all beer induced," explains Steve. "I've got a Lego Web site and I originally planned to have them as a little section on that. Then I showed a few people and they appreciated the Manics pastiche more than my Lego expertise, so I launched them as a separate site in February. The site has been

Handbag!

www.handbag.homepage.org.uk

Handbag is one of the most steadfastly funny sites on the Internet. And I'm not bragging, dear. This Internet zine concerns itself with fashion victims from the 60s and 70s and the secret lives that the mannequin-like models led when they weren't behind the camera. Ably edited by the 'leathery faced Millie' this site is a must see – even if the design and navigation are a little questionable.

The 10 commandments

1 Thou shalt run your site through a spell checker before you inflict it upon the world.
2 Thou shalt not use the HTML tag 'blink' – it makes people feel unwell.
3 Thou shalt not use a background that is louder than one of Jonathon Ross's suits.
4 Thou shalt include your email address on your site – how else will people know who to complain to?
5 Thou shalt not add a 'welcome to my home page' sound file to your site, especially one that you can't turn off.
6 Thou shalt test your site under both Navigator and Internet Explorer before you put it online.
7 Thou shalt not show off by stuffing unnecessary Java applets and animated GIFs on your site.
8 Thou shalt not even think about setting up a home page if you have nothing to say to the great wide world of the Internet.
9 Thou shalt never entertain the idea of putting a list of your CDs, videos or book collection on the Web.
10 Thou shalt not neglect your family, friends or social life in favour of spending every evening building your home page.

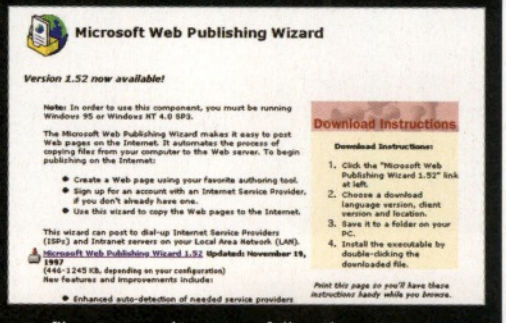
How to get your site online

Once you've finished your site and tested it locally, you'll want to get it all online. This means copying your site over to your ISP's Web server.

You can do this using file transfer protocol (FTP), and for that you need FTP software. Your best bet is to use the Web Publishing Wizard, which comes free with your copy of Internet Explorer. You'll find it under the Internet Tools section of your program list.

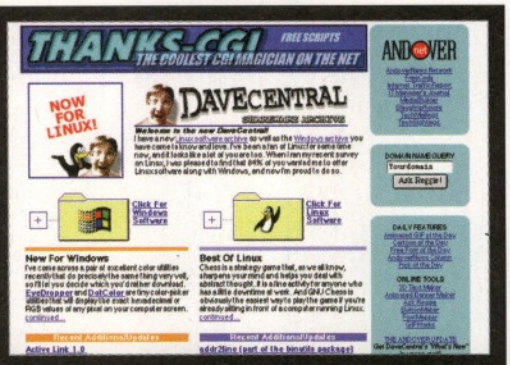
Before you start the process of transferring your files, you need to get some details from your ISP. You'll need the name of its Web server, together with a login name and password. Load up the wizard and follow the process step by step.

You're basically copying the files and directory structure from your hard disk on to your ISP's Web server.



Get help for free

There's no excuse for turning out a shoddy home page – the Web's full of resources, advice and free software to help you build a great site.



SITE CENTRAL
www.netscape.com/sitecentral
Go to this site for advice on using Netscape's Composer to build your home page. Sign up to the service and you get free Web building tools, access to photo and clip-art libraries and 11Mb of Web space.

WEB MONKEY
www.hotwired.com/webmonkey
From the makers of Hotwired comes Web Monkey – a fabulously useful guide for Web developers. It starts with Web basics and FrontPage tutorials and works its way up to a bit of JavaScript and Dynamic HTML. Packed full of step by step guides and resources.

SITE DEVELOPERS NETWORK
www.msdn.microsoft.com
If you want to take the Microsoft route to building a site, check out the tutorials and resources on the Site Developers Network. If you're taking your first steps in Web design, try Microsoft's free HTML editor, FrontPage Express. You can get more information from www.microsoft.com/frontpage

MACROMEDIA
www.macromedia.com
Get the latest news on Flash, Shockwave and the excellent Dreamweaver HTML editor, plus free downloads and tutorials.

WEB SITE GARAGE
www.websitegarage.com
Give your site a tune-up. Web Site Garage checks for flabby GIFs, dodgy links and browser compatibility.

DAVE CENTRAL
www.davecentral.com
Let Dave point you in the right direction for some of the best Web design shareware products on the Net.

GIF WIZARD
www.gifwizard.com
Keep your GIFs lean and mean. Take your GIFs to this site and get them compressed by up to 95 per cent.

THE FREE SITE
www.thefreesite.com
Links to hundreds of free resources, such as counters, fonts, sounds and graphics.

WEB PAGES THAT SUCK
www.webpagesthatsuck.com
This is designed by the author of the book *Web Pages that Suck*, Vincent Flanders. His mission is to 'clean up the Web, one site at a time'. Vince says he can teach us about good design by showing us bad design. You'll also find features on design and a 'Sucky site of the day'.

TV Cream

http://tv.cream.org

Two words sum up this professional and extensive site – television memorabilia. But unlike others that concentrate on credits and episodes, this site has an envious collection of themes. TV Cream has every show you've ever heard of and many more that you haven't. Beware, though, as this site can be scary. Check out the Rainbow theme – it's not quite the innocent ditty you might remember.

plugged by John Peel on Radio 1, on Radio Wales and in the *NME*, but Steve puts its popularity down to novelty value. "You'd understand someone making Steps or The Spice Girls out of Lego, but the Manic Street Preachers? Never," explains Steve.

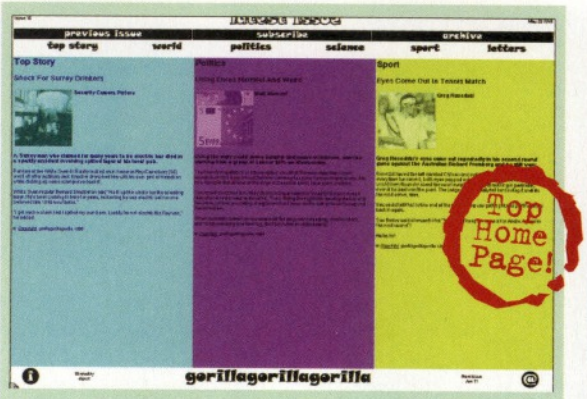
Michael Scott, creator of the incredibly useful pub guide, Down the Pub (**www.fortunecity.co.uk/amusement/drink/10**), has also taken the drinking approach. "My New Year's resolution for 1997 was to have a drink in 100 pubs before the year was out. I easily made that figure and I've had an avid interest in Web design ever since. I thought it would be a great way to combine my two interests."

Once you've got your inspiration, it's time to choose your Web design tools. Many of the best home pages, including Arsenal World, were built using simple tools, such as Microsoft's FrontPage. Tom Arah is the man behind the excellent Web design site at **www.designer-info.com**. His site was built with FrontPage, but his biggest criticism of the product is "its tendency to litter your code with unwanted font tags. The end results will look great on your system, but not necessarily on anyone else's".

"Turn your obsession into a home page – if that fails, it's time to turn to the drink."

Steve Anderson, of Lego Street Preachers fame, is a big fan of Macromedia's Dreamweaver: "I can't imagine making pages without Dreamweaver now, the code is so much tighter and neater than FrontPage".

Developing your home page can be a lonely business, though. You'd have thought that Arsenal FC might have offered support to Chris Parry and his Arsenal World site – not so. "I know it's aware of the site and I believe people from the club actually look at it on a regular basis," he says. "But because it has its own official site, it doesn't really co-operate with supporters running unofficial pages."



Gorillagorillagorilla

www.gorillagorillagorilla.freeserve.co.uk

It's not an ape-related site, as you might expect, but an off-the-wall collection of articles, such as how using the Euro can be detrimental to your health, or what happened when Greg Rusedski's eyes fell out at the French open, costing him the match. Updated on a bi-weekly basis, this little gem consists of only one Web page – but good things come in small packages, or so they say.

So, how did the Manic Street Preachers react to their Lego counterparts? Apparently, they know all about the inch-high clones, but Steve's had no direct contact with the group. And consider the plight of Mike, who's developed a site that's been shortlisted for a Yell award. It's devoted to BBC1's *Casualty* (at **www.holby-city.freeserve.co.uk**), but has had no support from the Beeb. Mike says the BBC is only interested in its own sites.

And it's not just the lack of support – there's the hours you'll have to think about keeping the site up to date as well. Chris Parry is lucky with his Arsenal World site – he has a small network of helpers who regularly contribute match reports and features.

Steve Anderson works full-time and studies part-time for a degree, so he's finding the maintenance of the Lego Street Preachers site hard. He has a handy tip though: "Develop templates for your pages – it makes them easy to update". Conspiracy Net is a big project – Jason Goodman says it takes between 10 and 25 hours a week to keep the site up to date.

It's worth all the hard work though – a successful home page can bring you fame, fortune and job offers. John Lundberg's Circlemakers site has brought him an element of fame and a nice holiday. "I guess the site has been the initial contact point for a lot of recent projects, such as the BBC's *Country File* documentary, which featured us making a crop circle formation," he explains.

"Then there's the NBC documentary, *Secrets of Deception* – all three of us were flown out to New Zealand to make a crop circle. More recently, there's been a formation for a Mitsubishi car advert." John is a Web designer by trade and he's convinced that the coverage of the site has also helped him to generate work.

Steve Anderson has manged to rise to even greater heights, thanks to the Lego Street Preachers site: "I've met Gareth Jones (aka kids TV presenter Gaz Top)," he says proudly – now it doesn't get much better than that, does it?

***Internet Magazine* will be introducing a new section which looks at people's home pages and tribute sites. If you'd like to have your personal site rated and reviewed in the magazine, send an email to our site reviews editor, Richard Dinnick (richardd@internet.emap.com). He and the country's top Web designers will put it under the microscope.**

Digger Barnes

http://home.clara.net/digger
http://home.clara.net/digger/jane
http://home.clara.net/digger/sixties

An article on home pages wouldn't be complete without a mention of Dave "Digger" Barnes. He's amassed a total of three Web sites so far. The first is a Janet Leigh (star of *Psycho*) tribute site. This and his Jane Asher home page are both packed with pictures, information and Web links. The odd one of the bunch is Digger's Sixties British pop culture page, which is sorted into the groups, stars, faces, movies, TV classics, trivia and images that made up the wackiest decade ever.

Inconstant Moon

www.inconstantmoon.com

Inconstant Moon provides you with everything you could wish to know about the earth's only natural satellite. A calendar gives you a detailed synopsis of what you'll be able to see on specific nights, while unfamiliar phrases or words are explained in plain English. A real labour of love featuring information, maps and images, but the site is still impressive. You can even listen to *Moonlight Sonata* as you move about the site.

Steadman

www.steadman.co.uk

This site just goes to prove what you can accomplish on the Web if you set your mind to it. Steadman is a popular beat combo of five people (the ugly one, the techie one, the cool one, the 70s one and the female one). You can learn about where they come from, listen to their music and even buy the album online. The design is simple and effective, as is the navigation, making it a top home page.

Win shop-in-a-box software worth £300!

Design a great e-commerce site and win one of five copies of the professional e-commerce software, Actinic Catalog 3.0.

Designing an online store that's attractive and easy to use could be more simple than you think. With the right tools and some careful thought, you could have the makings of an award-winning and money-making Web site.

Six tips for designing a top e-commerce site

- Offer the right products. Sell products that people would normally buy from a magazine page or by mail order.
- Make site promotion your number one priority. If people don't visit, they can't buy. Consider both online and offline marketing.
- A sales site should sell from the moment you arrive.
- Keep the clicks to a minimum. Every time you ask someone to click again, they have the option to forget your site and go elsewhere.
- Address people's concerns. Number one is credit card security, so reassure them.
- Provide a physical address and telephone number on your site, as this builds confidence and trust.

We've teamed up with Actinic Software to issue a challenge. Design a stunning e-commerce site using the Actinic Catalog 3.0 trial version and you could get your own fully registered copy. It's worth £300 and we have five copies to give away.

How to enter

1 You can either install Actinic Catalog 3.0 from our free cover CD, or download a copy from **www.zen.co.uk/download** (choose the SuperMall version). You'll also find an advanced user guide and a reviewer's guide on the site.

2 Go to **www.zen.co.uk/reg** to register for or a free 30-day trial e-commerce site.

3 Try out your ideas for a Web store. The minimum requirement is a home page and one page of items for sale online.

4 Send an email to **richardd@internet.emap.com** with the URL of your Web store entry, plus your name, address and phone number.

Closing date: 13 September 1999

The winners will be selected by Martyn Moore and Chris Barling of Actinic and announced in November's *Internet Magazine*. Five winners will receive full copies of Actinic Catalog 3.0.

Rules : The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. There will be no cash equivalents to the prizes. Employees and the families of Actinic Software, Zen Internet or EMAP Consumer Magazines are not eligible to enter.

Where to put your pages

Every ISP will give you free space to house your Web site – ranging in size from 5Mb to unlimited space (try Easynet and Prestel Online for unlimited Web space). Web sites only use a small amount of space – 10Mb should be plenty for everything but the most bloated of Web sites. But you can look at putting your Web site in one of the huge online communities, such as GeoCities, Tripod or FortuneCity. Not only can these services bring extra traffic to your site (GeoCities, for instance, gets around 19 million visitors per month), but they can also help you make a bit of money from your home page.

GeoCities

www.geocities.com

GeoCities gives you 11Mb of space, a free email account and templates to help build your Web site. The 3.5 million sites are categorised into themed communities, called neighbourhoods, and GeoCities members are known as homesteaders. The 'affiliates program' is interesting and could earn you a bit of money. You can put links to specific online stores on your site, and if you bring them customers, you get a percentage of the revenue. The online stores are US-based at the moment and include the bookstore Barnes and Noble, computer shop Egghead and Staples, the office superstore. Don't get carried away – it won't propel you into the *Sunday Times'* Richest people in the UK' list, but it's an easy way to make money. GeoCities has also made deals with some of the top news services on the Web, so you can add news headlines to your home page.

FortuneCity

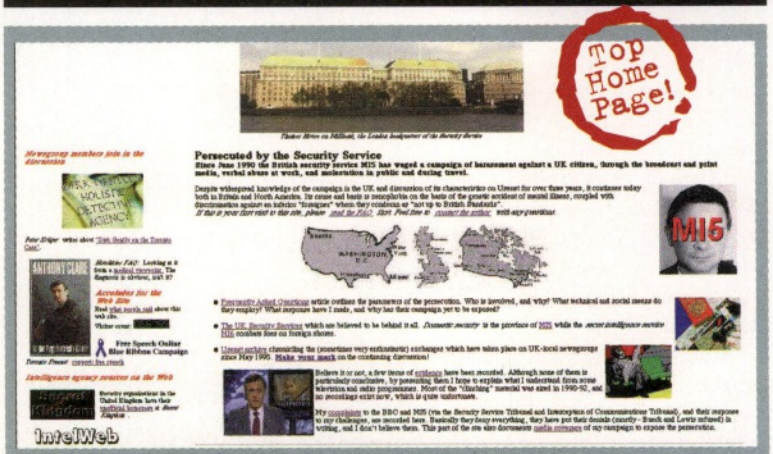
www.fortunecity.co.uk

FortuneCity doesn't give you the cash-making opportunities that GeoCities does, but it lets you participate in the world's largest 'virtual democracy'. You can have a say in how the themed districts are run. You could even apply to be a minister – they help run the city. FortuneCity gives you 20Mb of space and basic and advanced Web site building tools. FortuneCity gets around 835,000 visitors a day and there are a total of 1.45 million citizens in this brave new world.

Tripod

www.tripod.co.uk

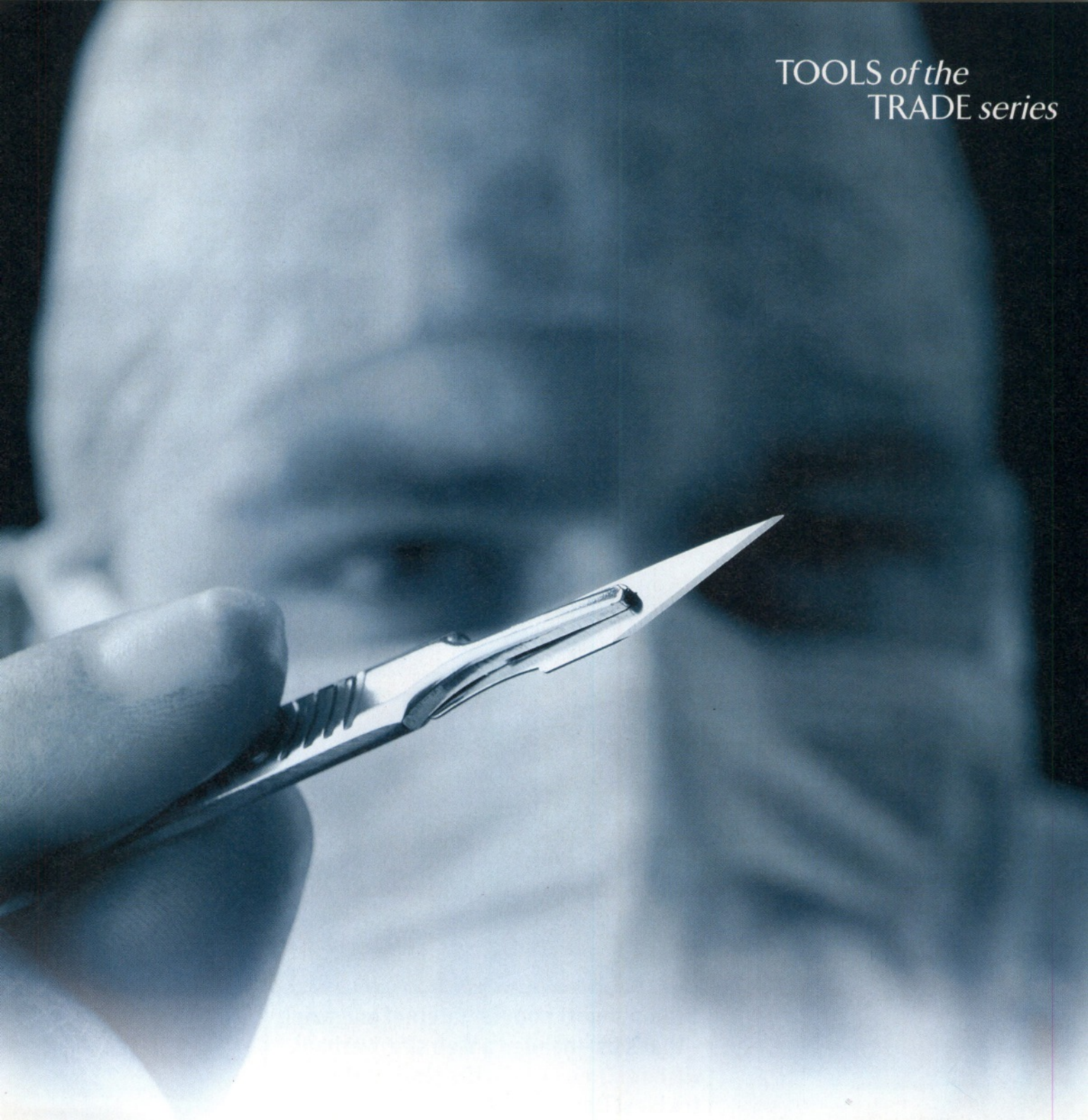
Tripod has the benefit of a UK version of its site, but it doesn't offer any of GeoCities' extras. You get 12Mb of Web space, a home page building tool and access to a gallery of free buttons and backgrounds.



Persecuted by the Security Service

www.five.org.uk

This site details the obsession one man has with the security services and the UK's press. Perhaps not a healthy obsession, the protagonist on this site nonetheless provides some detailed information on MI5 and MI6. Be sure to read the whole of the site, though, and draw your own conclusions. Is this one or more people taking the mickey or a seriously deluded man? A visit to the evidence file is a trip and a half. We can't make our minds up...



In business, communication is your critical tool

In theatre, the surgeon relies on the precision of his blade, it can make the difference between life and death. To the surgeon, his scalpel is a critical tool.

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netkonect

because in business, communication is imperative

The ultimate Web design challenge

Britain's most popular Internet magazine – that's us – needed a Web site overhaul. Richard Dinnick tells the story of the trickiest Design Challenge yet...

THE JUDGING PANEL

Roger Green	Managing Director, EMAP Online
Ken Jordan	Creative Director, Associated New Media
Matt Townend	Marketing Manager, UUNET
Ben Christie	Head of New Media, New PHD
Angus Kennedy	Author of the best-selling *Rough Guide to the Internet*
Martyn Moore	Editor, *Internet Magazine*
Andrew Archer	Advertising Director, *Internet Magazine*
Tanya Kreisky	Assistant Editor, *Internet Magazine*
Richard Dinnick	Site Reviews Editor, *Internet Magazine*

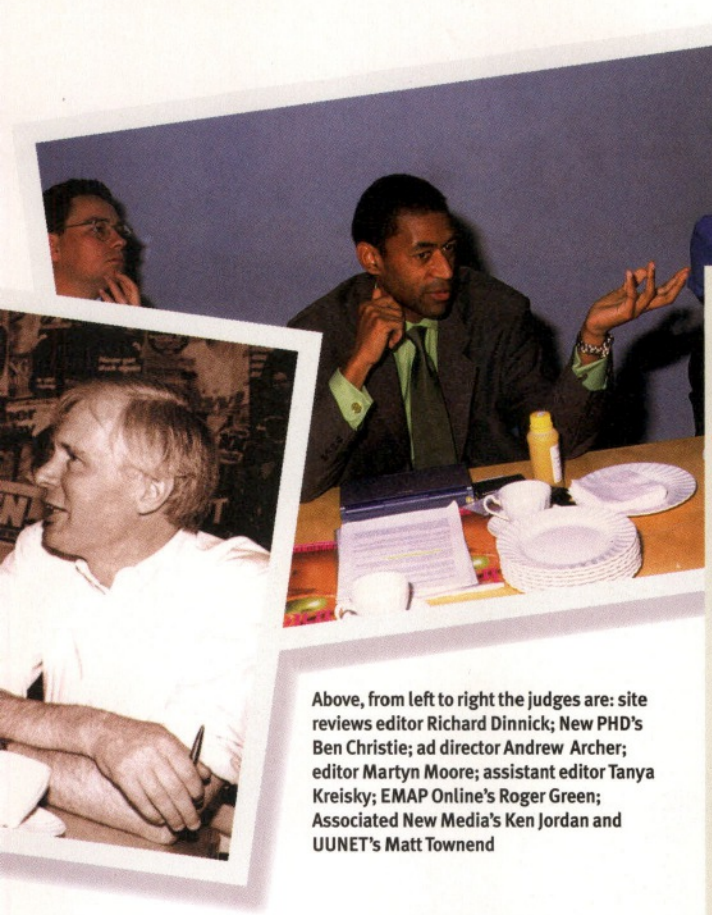
Over the past couple of years, the *Internet Magazine* Web Site Design Challenge has tackled a range of topics – from pop groups to charities and from schools to small businesses. But back in February, we decided it was time to set up the ultimate challenge – to redesign the *Internet Magazine* Web site itself.

In the past, we've picked the lucky recipient of a site that was to be redesigned, and invited three design companies to pitch for that client's business. And apart from picking our own site as the lucky recipient, that's what happened on this occasion.

We decided that we wanted to give the up-and-coming stars of Web design a chance, rather than take the project to the big boys – the likes of Agency.com, AKQA and iXL. With

Photography by Frank Rodgers

The ultimate web design challenge



Above, from left to right the judges are: site reviews editor Richard Dinnick; New PHD's Ben Christie; ad director Andrew Archer; editor Martyn Moore; assistant editor Tanya Kreisky; EMAP Online's Roger Green; Associated New Media's Ken Jordan and UUNET's Matt Townend

that knowledge, we ventured forth into the marketplace to find three or four brave souls who would take on this very difficult task.

The first company to come on board was Clockwork Web, led by its irrepressible MD, Jeremy Spiller. We met with Clockwork Web so soon after the initial decision to launch the Web Site Design Challenge that we hadn't even written the brief. Credit must go to Clockwork for its contribution to helping us fix in our minds exactly what we wanted to get out of a new site. This enabled us to prepare a brief to send to a selection of Web design agencies.

The brief asked the designers to take into consideration the standing we have within the Internet industry, and the good relationships we have with ISPs, software and hardware producers, and Web design consultancies. It went on to say that – as with all magazines – our aim is to develop the readership and would therefore have to look at new audiences, while not alienating our existing readers.

Flg21 rewrote our brief and delivered it back to us, along with the concept designs for feedback. It added aspects that we'd discussed during the course of three meetings and numerous telephone conversations. This new brief – showing that Flg21 knew exactly what we were after – said we had to be able to update the site easily, demonstrate state of the art Web design and generate income for the magazine. At the same time, we had to reinforce and extend our brand, complement the printed publication and build better relationships with our readers.

A tall order. But nothing that should be outside the capabilities of a good Web design agency. And to help us examine the three designs, we assembled a panel of top-flight judges. Four people working on the magazine – Martyn Moore, Andrew Archer, Tanya Kreisky and Richard Dinnick – were joined by five outside judges.

We needed someone who had a good knowledge of online magazines and the perfect man for the job was Roger Green, the MD and founder of EMAP Online. An experienced UK-based publisher, writer, magazine editor,

THE THREE DESIGNERS

Clockwork Web

***Internet Magazine* site hosted at:**
www.clockworkweb.com/imag

Time spent building site
The idea and site itself was developed over a period of four weeks.

Cost of the site
£35,000-£45,000, plus a maintenance retainer of approx £1,000 per month. This includes an updateable database facility with an admin area allowing *Internet Magazine* to update the site from its offices.

Key reference sites
HI-TEC Sports
www.hi-tecsports.com
Carlton plc
www.carltonplc.co.uk
SportsAid Foundation
www.sportsaid.org.uk
Warner Holidays
www.warnerholidays.co.uk
PKF
www.pkf.co.uk
Event International
www.eventsinternational.co.uk

Employees
12

Founded
1995

Specialist skills
Extremely good design using new technologies where appropriate. Making technology as user-friendly as possible. Creating sophisticated facilities that don't baffle clients or site visitors. Hand-written HTML – no WYSIWYG editors allows clients to update their sites themselves and use database integration, e-commerce and Flash.

Server hosted by
Clockwork Web.

Contact
Jeremy Spiller

Email
email@clockworkweb.com

Phone
(0171) 471 0770

Web site
www.clockworkweb.com

Flg21

***Internet Magazine* site hosted at:**
www.flg21.com/internet-magazine/site

Time spent building site
Two and a half weeks on the presentation, research and graphics.

Cost of the site
£60,000

Key reference sites
Baan
www.baan.co.uk
Slazenger
www.slazenger.co.uk
Sottini
www.sottini.co.uk
Slush Puppie
www.slushpuppie.co.uk

Employees
26

Founded
1996

Specialist skills
Mixing marketing, Internet knowledge and technical ability. Thinking about the client's objective and creating a suitable vehicle. Post production support.

Server hosted by
Bandwidth from Net Konnect/Legend Internet

Contact
Darryn Foster

Email
daryn.foster@flg21.com

Phone
(0113) 294 9494

Web site
www.flg21.com

SP New Media

***Internet Magazine* site hosted at:**
www.spnewmedia.co.uk/internetmagazine

Time spent building site
Three full days, including design styling.

Cost of the site
£10,000, plus £200 per annum for hosting (based on using PSI or UUNet with discount) and £49 for the domain.

Key reference sites
Charles Schwab
www.schwab-worldwide.com/europe
Amtico
www.amtico.co.uk
Nuffield Hospitals
www.nuffieldhospitals.org.uk

Employees
9

Founded
1997

Specialist skills
We only design and build corporate Web sites, CD-ROMs and screensavers.

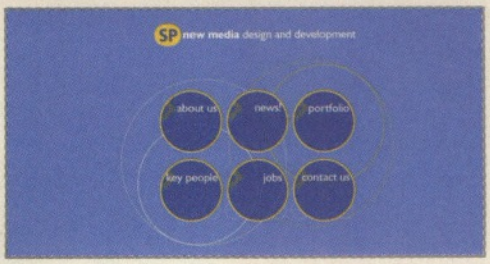
Server hosted by
Rapidsite in San Francisco

Contact
Aaron Chatterley

Email
aaron@spnewmedia.co.uk

Phone
(01235) 772 846

Web site
www.spnewmedia.co.uk



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The ultimate web design challenge

online publisher, and Internet industry commentator, Green launched the first-ever PC and Internet magazines in Europe. His Web successes include the multi award-winning services 1Ski (**www.1ski.com**), the UK's most comprehensive ski and snowboarding information service; Aloud.com (**www.aloud.com**), Britain's first online pop, rock and live event ticket service, and Bargainholidays (**www.bargainholidays.com**), the UK's first – and largest – online holiday store.

Next on our hit list was a successful creative person, who would know good design when they saw it. Again, we found the perfect person in Ken Jordan, the creative director of Associated New Media. The company behind the excellent This is London (**www.thisislondon.com**), Soccernet (**www.soccernet.com**), search engine UK Plus (**www.ukplus.com**) and the newly-launched This Is Money (**www.thisismoney.com**) has persuaded Jordan to jump ship from AOL (**www.aol.com**), one of the UK's leading ISPs.

Ben Christie is the head of new media at New PHD, one of the top banner ad companies in the country. As such, Christie was the perfect candidate for examining the brief and seeing how well the three candidates had understood and stuck to it.

Finally, we invited best-selling author of the *Rough Guide to the Internet* and general Web guru, Angus Kennedy, to have a look at the sites from his winter retreat in Australia.

With their help, we were able to assess which one of the three sites that were submitted to us would replace our current site. As it was, the competition was stiff, with all three Web design agencies delivering excellent sites. "I was amazed by the standard of the entries," said editor Martyn Moore.

As the three sites were examined, our panel of expert judges dispensed some good advice, which could be taken on board by anyone designing their own site.

In the brief, we had asked the agencies to include some form of Flash animation at the front of the site, but it was Ken Jordan who put us right on that score. "The Flash should not form the opening page," he said. "It should be elsewhere."

Angus Kennedy concurred. "Excessive use of image maps and Shockwave can be a real pain," he said. "I doubt anyone who's looking for technology news wants to wait for a corny animation to finish loading before they can enter a site." So we considered our knuckles duly rapped.

There was also top advice concerning choosing an agency. "The key skill of an agency is to ask questions," said Matt Townend. Roger Green agreed and added: "An agency must understand your core business and ask you what your objectives are." Fortunately, all three of our challengers adhered to this golden rule – grilling the editorial team as to the sort of site we were after.

This led us to the conclusion that the design could fail for a number of reasons, the most important of which was probably a lack of Net knowledge – if the design agency questions its client closely, mistakes could be avoided. "Some new business Web sites are in decline because they don't know why they're on the Web," said Ken Jordan. "They know they should be on the Internet, they just don't know why."

Ben Christie said: "Design is important, but information is more important." After all, you're trying to impart information, not design. And to facilitate that, design should be kept fairly straightforward – within certain parameters – enabling people to find their way around a site. "Design is not just words and pictures," explained Ken Jordan. "Navigation is also an essential part of the mix." Indeed, it's the glue that holds the design together. "Always keep the navigation in the same place," said Roger Green, "otherwise you'll confuse your visitors."

Check out the sites for yourself and tell us what you think

Starting over the page you can see the three sites that were created for us. Each of the three design companies has placed the *Internet Magazine* project on its own site, and the URLs for those pages are printed at the top of the articles.

Have a look at the work on the Web and let us know what you think of each of the proposed sites. You can email your comments to site reviews editor Richard Dinnick at **richardd@internet.emap.com**.

Next month, we'll look at the site selected for development – then the real work starts on the *Internet Magazine* Web site. The August issue will be on sale on 23 July.

Clockwork Web

THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE

www.clockworkweb.com/imag

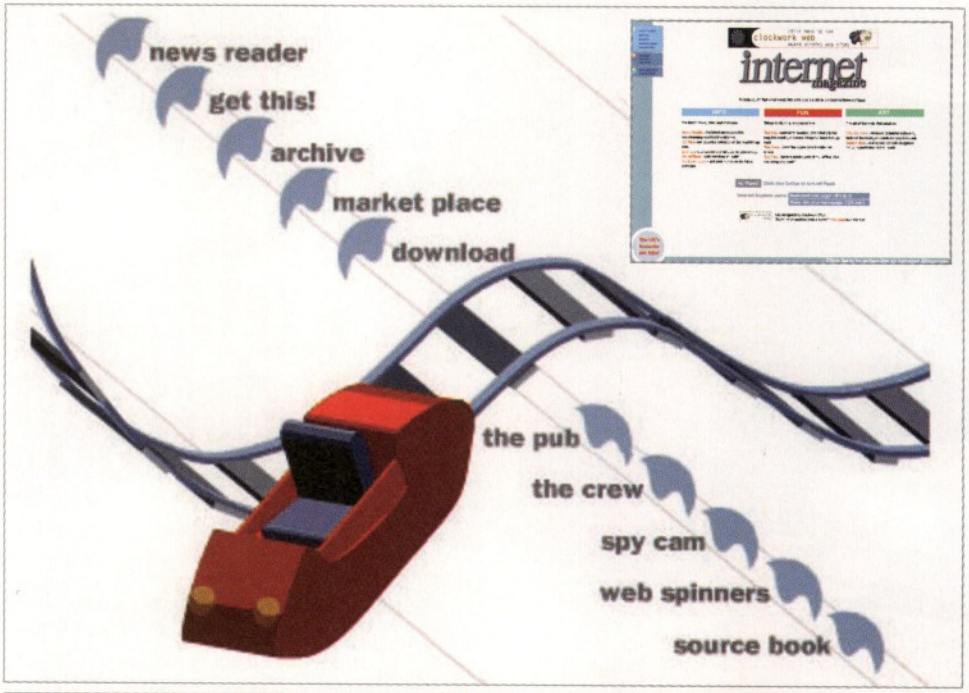
Clockwork Web requested a preliminary meeting, which was attended by four of its team: Jeremy Spiller (MD), Stephen Bennet (design and development director), Katie Desborough (senior designer) and Rupert Sliwa (lead designer). We were slightly outnumbered here at the magazine, but the meeting was fun, fruitful and helped us to solidify the brief that we eventually gave to the other contestants.

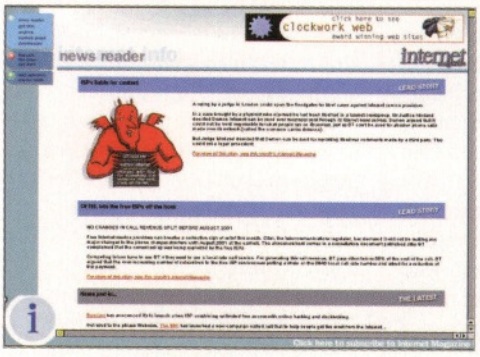
The team all asked us some searching questions and made us think about the sort of questions we should be asking them. "That's the sign of a good design agency," commented Ben Christie, head of new media at New PHD.

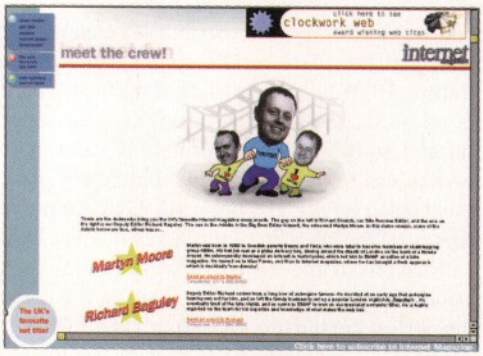
The design team came back to us with two concept designs. Both came with a printed *raison d'etre*, giving the basis for the concepts and an implementation plan for each design.

The current *Internet Magazine* Web site has a showcase Flash design, and we wanted to keep this concept as an entry point to our site. Naturally, we wanted a "skip" button included, so people who didn't have time or fast Net connections wouldn't have to sit through a long animation.

Clockwork provided the animation itself, but not on the grand scale that we had originally envisaged. Instead, we had a roller coaster car shooting across the screen, with the animation zooming in on a small section of track. What Rupert calls "boingies" – disk type objects on the track super-structure – represent the different sections of the site. "A mouseover produces a spring-like sound, giving the impression that you've twanged the wires," he explains with a grin.







A fun roller coaster theme; clean, clear news pages; a fun 'meet-the-crew' section – all good stuff from Clockwork Web. You can check it out for yourself at www.clockworkweb.com/imag

Further into the site, Clockwork Web produced two pages in full – the news page and the page about the editorial team. The news reader was praised for its clean design and ease of reading. The page would be dynamically generated and updated via a protected Web page.

The "meet the crew" page made us laugh for all the right reasons. The brief said this page needed to be personable, bringing the editorial team closer to its readers. Consequently, Martyn Moore (the editor) was depicted as 'Dad' holding the hands of his two 'boys' – Richard Baguley (associate editor) and Richard Dinnick (site reviews editor). The biographies also made for rib-tickling reading.

The original concepts

The first was a waterborne idea, which involved a Flash animation of the letter 'i' appearing, Excalibur-like, from a pool of water. "One of the most appealing aspects of the Internet is that it's full of surprises," read Rupert's conceptual idea. "This concept expands upon the idea of surprises, by pulling unexpected images and sounds from a pool of water." This was a fresh, clean design, but we felt it concentrated too much on the corporate aspect of the magazine's identity.

The second design went in the opposite direction – fun, fun, fun. Kate and Rupert felt that a roller coaster would represent the idea of moving around both the Internet and *Internet Magazine*. Another Flash animation would depict the big dipper in action, while the words "get ready for the ride of your life" would appear ominously above the superstructure. Other parts of the site, such as the "meet the crew" page, would continue the theme park concept.

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Personal Computer World Runner up

ACTINIC CATALOG

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO SELL ON THE NET

Flg21 EVOLUTION NOT REVOLUTION www.flg21.com/internet-magazine/site

We first met Flg21 in the comfortable environment of a restaurant. Guy Redwood, the company's technical director, and Darryn Foster, the MD, were very enthusiastic about the idea of redeveloping the *Internet Magazine* site. So much so, that it was Darryn Foster himself who oversaw the rest of the process and liaised with us. He took a serious risk by wearing a Leeds United shirt at the second meeting, knowing the editor shares his passion for the team.

Before we were shown any visuals, Darryn gave us an impressive demonstration of how his company approaches a commission. His presentation included an analysis of our business, his own research and a redefinition of the brief. We'd deliberately kept it loose, but Flg21 tightened it considerably.

Flg21's approach to site design was different from Clockwork's. Instead of concentrating on the Flash animation that we had requested, the concepts that it delivered to us (all seven of them) were based around the Web pages within the site.

With so many different designs to sift through, the concept meeting with Flg21 took longer than with the other two designers combined. Darryn Foster also made us read the brief he had rewritten, pulling out all the salient points and setting out his vision for the future of the site.

The Flg21 team provided a host of good ideas. The reason it didn't provide an animated front page was that Foster thought we could sell the space to designers who wanted to show off their state of the art animation. This would be a separate link from the start page, negating the potential time waster we had requested. It would also generate further income for the magazine.

The second good idea was that the site should have a game to make it sticky (the term given to sites that make you stay at a site for as long as possible). The first idea was to make a horse race out of our ISP tests and call it the ISP stakes. We rejected this as belittling this widely respected feature of the magazine.

Instead, Flg21 came up with an *Internet Magazine* trail – an online treasure hunt, that would turn players into Internet experts and give them the chance to win fabulous prizes. The aim of the game would be to find the winner's page by following clues dotted about the site. This would also encourage people to explore the site and get the most out of it.

The breadth of Flg21's vision for the site left us stunned. Ours could become *the* Internet site to visit, it said, for any number of reasons.

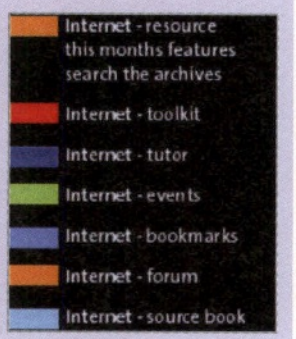
Flg21 researched our business, quizzed us about our needs for the site and rewrote the brief. Check out the fruits of its labours at www.flg21.com/internet-magazine/site

The original concepts

Flg21 provided us with a total of seven concept designs. These ranged from what we dubbed a "Wired" design, with a lime green motif and electronic font, to a blue and green concept that reminded us of a medical site.

That said, all conformed to Matt Townend's mantra for online magazine success: "An online magazine must have elements from the printed version".

We selected the purple site to act as the basis for pulling aspects from the other designs together. A brightly-coloured navigation tool was culled from one concept with a black background, while a scrolling news bar was culled from a design that's similar to the current *Internet Magazine* Web site.



Connect, Share, Listen to the Internet

Internet Access with Memory

SupraExpress is the world-renowned modem brand that constantly wins reviews for unbeatable Internet access at superb value. The new **SupraExpress 56e Memory Modem** continues to offer fast and reliable download speeds of up to 56K but with something new – memory.

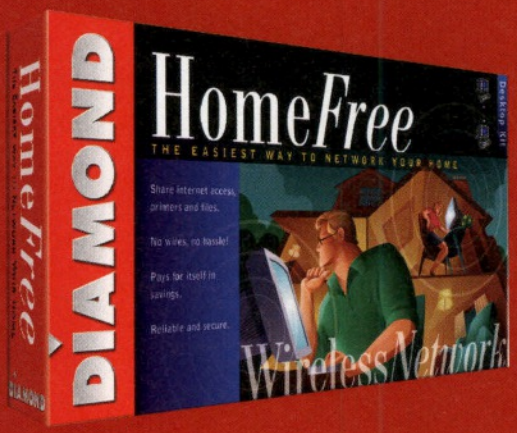
With 2MB of onboard memory you can now receive up to 40 faxes and 15 voice messages even when you are switched off – with total security. For functionality and value for money **SupraExpress** is the best all round modem to buy. Don't just take our word for it – look out for the reviews.

DIAMOND MULTIMEDIA

Wireless Networking

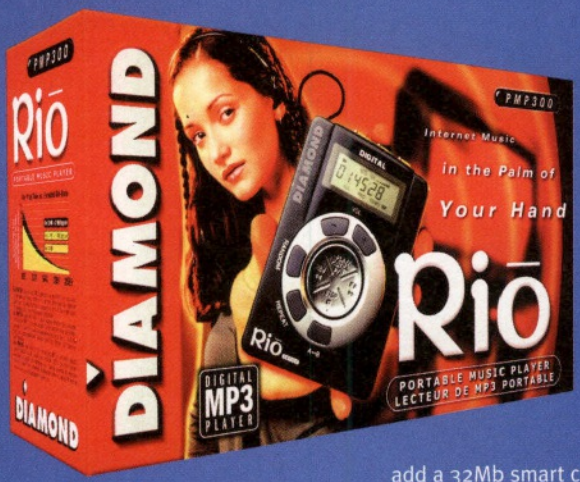
The new **HomeFree** wireless network is the ultimate way to share Internet access, printers and files, or even enjoy multi-player games. Using your phone line at home, you simply plug it in and immediately start sharing information and peripherals without the expense of wiring your home or buying extras.

HomeFree gives you complete flexibility and connects up to 8 PCs in the house within 50 metres, with high speed transmission rates of up to 1Mbps. Enjoy fast moving games with your friends, high-speed Internet access and say good-bye to sharing with floppy disks.



www.diamondmm.co.uk
01189 444477

Internet Music on the Move



Rio is the first worldwide portable music player to play music tracks from MP3 files – the most popular music file format on the Internet. Or using the software included with Rio, MP3 files can also be made legally from CDs†*.

It's the personal stereo that fits in a shirt pocket, weighs less than a mouse and never skips. With 32MB of on-board rewritable memory, Rio can store up to 60 minutes of digital music, or double when you add a 32Mb smart card. Also included is a preset graphic equaliser with 4 settings, headphones, digital display, random and repeat playback modes.

RioPort.com

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SP New Media

AT HOME WITH TED

www.spnewmedia.co.uk/internetmagazine

As with the other Web design challenge competitors, SP New Media was represented in our initial meeting by its managing director, Aaron Chatterley. Indeed, it was Aaron who saw us through the whole process, with some help from Neale Hall (creative director).

SP New Media's team addressed the nature of the *Internet Magazine* site and the brief we gave them by producing two designs. Both were shown to us on-screen.

Once again, we decided that the design agency should go ahead with the less corporate of the two ideas. But we were unhappy with some aspects of the cartoon-style character that SP new Media had designed.

For ease of discussion, the character became known as Ted. But we were uncomfortable with this character that would represent the magazine as it was male, white and had a geeky-looking tie on, which we hated!

Aaron was very receptive to our comments, and although we didn't want to enter into a detailed design conversation, we came up with several alternatives that SP New Media added to. The team came up with a total of seven new characters, ranging from "Red Ted", through a couple of fish, to a character dubbed "Mr Imag". We liked Mr Imag, but we still preferred the less formal name of Ted.

The finished Web site kicks off with a straightforward Flash animation of Ted shuffling his feet. If he doesn't, you're told you haven't got the Flash plug-in. You're given three choices – you can carry on with or without Flash, or you can click on a link to get the plug-in from Macromedia's site (at www.macromedia.com).

SP New Media has designed three other pages. All of these have Ted doing something using Flash – but nothing too busy or overcomplicated.

Ted finally morphed into a magazine-shaped creature to link to the printed magazine. The little chap underpinned the preferred SP New Media version. Check out the site at www.spnewmedia.co.uk/internetmagazine

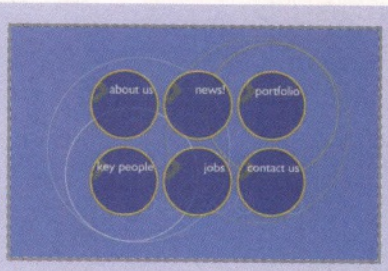
For example, the news page depicts him blinking and waving every now and again, while on the fish cam page he's geared up in goggles, snorkel and flipper ready for a dip in our fish tank.

This really engaged our panel of judges and elicited smiles from everyone. "It's very funny," commented Roger Green, MD of EMAP Online. "The character works really well," added Ken Jordan, creative director at Associated New Media. It met the need to be friendly and welcoming.

The site was praised for the ease with which visitors could find their way between the pages. Maintaining the same font throughout, the navigation bar was always at the bottom of the frame, which was always contained within the browser window. im

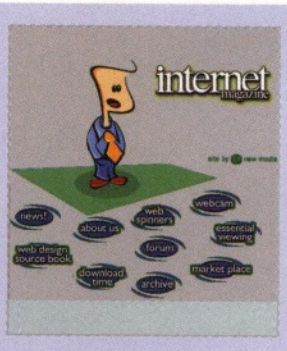
The original concepts

The first outline that SP New Media showed us was possibly better developed than the second, but it was deemed too sensible for our needs. That said, it shared common aspects with the other design. It had good navigation and a clean feel to it. The basis of the design was circular. The page put headings and links in circles that changed colour on mouse over. SP New Media liked this idea so much that, when we rejected it, the agency immediately adopted it as its own!



The second concept was that of a home, with a character showing visitors around it. We automatically chose this idea, as it had more character and we thought this would make us look approachable – which, of course, we are!

The attention to detail was impressive, from the wallpaper used on the opening page to the Billy Whizz haircut of the original Ted character. A top design that had to be given the green light.



Ever get the feeling your ISP hasn't got room for you?

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cult viewing

When the brainwashed community of a cult comes into contact with the liberalism of the Net, there's bound to be a clash. Nick Ryan looks at mass suicides, worried FBI agents and anti-cult groups consisting of hostile ex-members

Illustration by Agent F

The siege of Waco, nerve gas attacks on the Tokyo subway and mass suicide as comets pass in the night sky – think of the word cult and these images could well spring to mind.

To most of us, the word cult conjures up images of an evil religious group, often with a charismatic leader who's engaged in brainwashing and other mind control techniques. It probably believes the end of the world is imminent, and just for good measure, collects large amounts of weaponry in preparation for an apocalyptic war.

In which case, of course, you'd think these groups were made for the Internet, with its global reach and propensity for the weird and wonderful. A quick search on the Web reveals dozens of sites discussing the subject. But most of these are anti-cult organisations or individuals that have left cults and are critical of their former group. Of course, one person's cult is another's religion, so it comes as no surprise that few of these sources agree upon a definition of a cult – even though the subject is debated in great length, and often with strong emotions.

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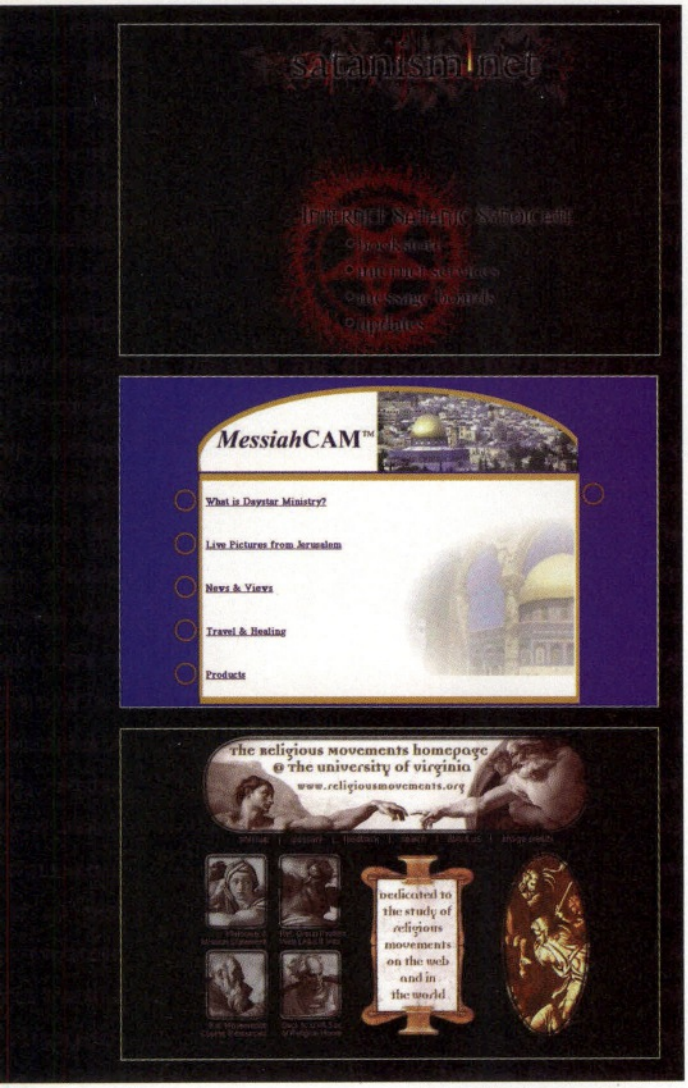


These sites all have contrasting aims, but each has a regular following on the Net. From the top is satanism.net, the MessiahCAM and the Religious Movements home page

What seems to be an acceptable compromise among these sites and newsgroups is the use of the term New Religious Movement (commonly referred to as NRM). According to the Ontario-based group Religious Tolerance (**www.religioustolerance .org**), there are at least eight different definitions of a cult.

Most of these descriptions have negative connotations and are promoted by those in the anti-cult movement (which is often comprised of ex-cult members) and the media.

Whether NRMs use the Internet as their main method of communication is debatable, though. On his Religious Movements Home page (at **http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257**), Professor Jeffrey Hadden says: "The Internet lets you immerse yourself – however deeply you choose – in the subcultural world of new religious movements.

"You can delve into pages that are being created to convert you to a new faith or sect. You can log on to newsgroups that are used by believers to discuss the finer points of their faith. Or you can participate in heated debate about any number of opinions. There are plenty of Web sites and newsgroups that are run by people whose primary objective in life seems to be the destruction of religious groups. But Hadden says the Internet has its limits: "The experience of virtual reality might be exciting, but you'll never be able to capture the feeling of being in the midst of Holiness, people handling poisonous snakes, or the awe of watching the Reverend Sun Myung Moon joining 2,000 couples in marriage in a mass ceremony".

The pick of the sites

The evidence of cults online involves all kind of extremes and humour. You can become a member of Circlemakers, for instance, an online community of crop circle makers – check out the award-winning site at **www.circlemakers.org**.

At the MessiahCAM (at **www.messiahcam.org**), you can take a look at the sealed East Gate of Jerusalem, which is ready and waiting for the Messiah to appear. Alternatively, you can join online prayers with the Jesus Army (at **www.jesus.org.uk**). On a different note, the Beastwatch Web site (at **www.beastwatch.com**) tells you of the Coming of the Beast, as described in Daniel and Revelation.

If you want to 'stray from the path', you can look up Satanism at a whole host of sites, such as the Internet Satanic Syndicate (at **www.satanism.net**).

The Mormons have announced the launch of a new Web site called the Family Search Internet Genealogy Service (at **www.familysearch.org**), which has links to the names of 400 million dead people. Members can identify their ancestors – some of whom can be 'baptised' – and in an eight-week test, the site apparently received over 200 million hits.

Millenium groups

All these sites are set against an obsession with all things millennial. According to Daniel Wojcik, author of *The End of the World As We Know It*: "The approach of the millennium has seen an increase in the number of people who believe in a coming apocalypse."

Various US opinion polls show that between 20 and 40 per cent of Americans believe Armageddon is imminent. "There's nothing in the Bible about the world ending in the year 2000, but these ideas have become a folk belief," says Wojcik. There's an interesting dichotomy here, though, as many millennialists criticise technology and industrial progress, but still push their ideas through the Internet.

Other research has shown that around 75 per cent of Americans believe in extra-terrestrials and UFOs. Professor Irving Hexham runs an NRM discussion group (at **nurel-l@majordomo.ucalgary.ca**) based on cosmic theories that 'threaten their version of Christianity'. He also has a Cults and Religion Web site at **www.ucalgary.ca/~nurelweb**.

Brenda Brasher, of Mount Union College in the US, has studied the growth of the Internet and its relation to NRMs, and millennial groups in particular. Announcing your belief that it's the end of the world has become standard practice on the Web, according to Brasher. She says it's rare if a millennial group doesn't use the Net to publish its beliefs.

When members of the Concerned Christians group were arrested in Israel last autumn – suspected of plotting violent acts to hasten the coming of the Messiah – one Israeli millennial specialist expressed his shock at discovering the group didn't have a Web site. "How can any self-respecting millennialist group not be on the Web?" he exclaimed.

Investigated by the FBI

Law enforcement agencies are concerned about NRMs on the Net. When FBI agents met with millennial scholars at the 1998 AGM of the American Academy of Religion, they repeatedly probed the scholars on how millennialists use the Internet.

The academics confirmed the agents' worst fears, saying every millennial group had a Web site and used the Internet as a primary mode of communication.

Mass suicide

One of the most shocking and well-documented examples of an NRM using the Internet is the case of Heaven's Gate. The Heaven's Gate community consisted of 39 well-educated individuals who committed suicide in 1997, believing they were transporting themselves to a space craft tailing the Hale-Bopp comet.

The community lived in a small mansion in Santa Fe, California, and supported itself by designing Web sites through a company called Higher Source. Formed by Marshall H. Applewhite and Bonnie Lu Trusdale Nettles, the leaders travelled the US for years, gathering followers and saying they'd arrived on Earth via a spaceship in the 1970s and had incarnated into human bodies.

"The leaders travelled the US saying they'd arrived on Earth via a spaceship in the 1970s"

They taught students a bizarre mix of beliefs, founded on a diet of Bible-meets-*Star Trek* philosophy. When the comet appeared, the Heaven's Gate community saw it as a sign that their class was ready to graduate. The words Red Alert flashed on its home page (**http://levelabovehuman.org**).

CULT SITES ON THE INTERNET

A good starting point, if you're interested in cults, is Yahoo!'s list of sites at www.yahoo.co.uk/Society_and_Culture/Religion_and_Spirituality/Cults. But most of the groups here are 'anti-cult'. For the 'dark side', you can visit www.satanism.net and the Internet Satanic Syndicate to learn about the Church of Satan, the Temple of Set and the ultra-secretive British group, the Order of Nine Angles.

To temper such temptation, perhaps you should turn next to the Jesus Army at www.jesus.org.uk, where the kind folks will help you with an online prayer.

To understand more about the goings-on in the secretive world of Scientology, we recommend Operation Clambake (at www.xenu.net) for an inner look at the Church's workings. For a range of opinions concerning the Church, have a look at www.scientology.org, www.lronhubbard.org and www.dianetics.org. But beware – passions get hot!

For a less than inspiring view of Jerusalem's ancient walls, www.messiahcam.org offers the best spot. Or turn to www.mille.org/sites.html for a comprehensive list of millennial sites.

One of our favourites in this roundup is Beastwatch (at www.beastwatch.com) , which is 'Preparing God's People for the End Times'.

For disturbing listening, be prepared for http://prophecy.org/sound.htm, which houses "The Voice of Jehovah, Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit". You'll find an even more bizarre taste of things to come at http://pages.prodigy.net/lightoftheworld, which proclaims to be the Web site of God.

For conspiracies galore, have a look at the UFO, millenium and conspiracy Web site at www.mt.net/~watcher/march12.html, and marvel at a girl who turns into an alien before your eyes. And if you like your neo-nazism with a Christian identity, the Aryan Nations site is at www.nidlink.com/~aryanvic/index.html.

The best site for any sceptic has to be Bob's Church of the SubGenius (at www.subgenius.com/index.html).

Applewhite – calling himself "Do" – decided that a 'laying down' of their bodies was necessary, and 39 members committed mass suicide in a three-day ritual in March 1997. The group only had around 100 members at its peak, but the suicide ensured the whole world knew of its existence. There was even an online epitaph, coined by one of its members, which made a poignant plea to the world to understand what it had done.

"The Second Coming is really here," it said. "We are at the End of the Age. It's our understanding that all minds and souls are back for another chance to choose the path they wish to pursue. And what I know from my teachers is that the time has come for this next level classroom to close, and for us to make the transition from this world to Our Father's World."

Attracting new members

Not all NRMs use the Net to attract such intense controversy. Many of the Christian evangelical and charismatic movements use the Web to attract newcomers, or to allow casual visitors to view the group.

John Campbell, webmaster for the Manchester-based Jesus Army (at **www.jesus.org.uk**) says: "Our aim is to communicate the unchanging Christian message in a modern manner. I'm sure if Jesus was around today he'd use the Internet! The pages are aimed at people who wouldn't normally think of going to church."

The site runs a message board that attracts a lot of good-natured discussion, according to Campbell, as well as a prayer request service called Can We Help?

"We started the site in May 1995, originally to make sure there was a Christian presence on the Net. I've tried to keep the pages up to date with technology like MP3 files, Real video, e-commerce and Java."

"The amazing power of the Web for communication means I can develop genuine friendships with people I've never met, and barriers of space and time can be overcome in an unbelievable way."

The Church and detractors

Another NRM which has made extensive use of the Internet is the Church of Scientology. On the Church's official site (**www.scientology.org**), you can take a personality test online – but you have to meet someone in person to receive and explain the results – and you can chat with over 13,000 Scientologists.

The battles between the Church and its detractors have become legendary on the Net. One British opponent of Scientology told us: "The battle between Scientology and its opponents has been transformed by the Net. Since 1995, the whole nature of our activity has changed because individuals are much less isolated".

He defined a cult as: "A group that's very controlling of its members' access to information. When this mentality confronts the Internet mentality, which is one of extreme liberalism, there's bound to be a clash".

Incredibly, the newsgroup **alt.religion.scientology** has been more popular than **alt.supermodels**. As writer William Shaw, author of *Spying In Guru Land*, explains, the main reason that the Church of Scientology has a large Internet presence is due to the high Net profile of its opponents.

"The Church of Scientology was only responding to well-known individuals who created successful anti-Scientology sites on the Web in the early 90s," says Shaw.

Anti-cult groups

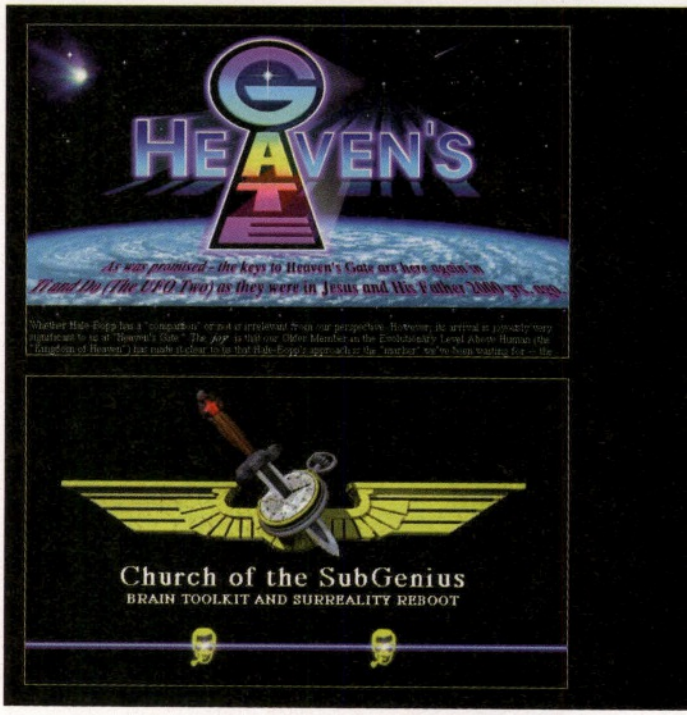
Some of the most active Web sites are created by the anti-cult groups. Sites such as the Cult Information Centre (at **www.xenu.net/cic**) include definitions of a cult and descriptions of mind control techniques. The American Family Foundation is one of the main anti-cult groups in the US, and houses a huge and comprehensive site (at **www.csj.org**).

Triumphing Over London Cults (at **www.ftech.net/~hamrag**) specifically targets the International Churches of Christ, including testimonies from former members, audio recordings of leaders, and links to dozens of other groups. The traumatic abuse in cults Web site (at **www.cyberpass.net/truth/essay**) explores what it calls 'an unfamiliar social problem'. It uses the example of 'survivors' of Siddha Yoga, which it describes as an abusive cult.

William Shaw underlines this point: "Are new religious movements using the Internet to disseminate their message? I'm very dubious about this. I think they're remarkably quiet on the Internet. I don't think people who are interested in winning souls are really into it."

Shaw believes the anti-cult groups need and use the Net more effectively: "People in cults don't need virtual communities. They've got their own virtual communities in the cults they've joined. But people who've left cults are often desperate to recreate the experience they've left... however hostile they are to the religion they were in. They joined cults because they wanted to save the world from evil. They join anti-cult groups to do the same thing, to recreate evangelising communities. The Web gives them the perfect opportunity to do this".

Professor Hadden has the last words: "The Internet can't really take you into the inner sanctum of religious groups, or the hearts and minds of those who believe. But it can get you much closer to scores of religious movements than ever before, without actually encountering these groups in the flesh. It's a great show and a great learning laboratory". im



The Heaven's Gate Web site is still active, showing the Red Alert message that announced the group's moment of waiting. The Church of the SubGenius takes a more sceptical approach

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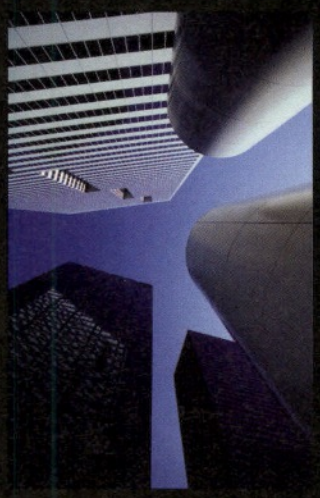

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The global cost of fixing Y2K bugs is estimated at £530 million. Former Technology Journalist of the Year, Davey Winder, explains how the Internet can help you kill the Millennium Bug for free

The tabloid press have had a field day with the Y2K Bug – from conspiracy theories about computer cartels conning us into buying new PCs to warnings about the end of civilisation. Some respected computer columnists have even dismissed the bug as fantasy.

The truth falls between the two. You'll probably feel the impact of the bug to some degree, but you won't see planes crashing, food supplies vanishing and anarchy on the high street. So if you've built an underground bunker and stockpiled your baked beans, your entry into the new millennium will be rather lonely and smelly.

There isn't a magic Web site that can cure all your Y2K problems, but the Internet holds most of the information you'll need to become Y2K-compliant. All you have to do is identify the likely problems and visit the relevant sites.

A bug's life

You could be forgiven for thinking the Y2K bug is a new phenomenon that's only been discovered in the last couple of years. The truth is, the people who should know better have known for decades, assuming the bug would be obsolete long before now because of the rapid evolution of the computer industry. They were mistaken.

In the 1950s – when memory was measured in gigaless bytes and program code was hole-punched onto six-inch card – memory and physical space was conserved by using double-digit dates (such as 99 instead of 1999). Fifty years on, the double-digit date is still being used because computers have advanced through evolution, not revolution. Basic processes have remained in place, and old languages, such as COBOL and C, have been improved rather than re-written. Two-digit dates are part of this evolutionary legacy.

So a better description would be the date digit bug, and it might effect more than just the rollover to the year 2000. The problem is down to poor programming as a result of leap year confusion. If a year is divisible by either four, 100 or 400, it's a leap year. Y2K is a leap year, 1900 wasn't. You can see whether your computer is compliant by setting it to a date in February.

Your PC keeps track of the date and time even when it's switched off, using a Real-Time Clock (RTC) which is mounted on the motherboard and powered by a miniature battery – the more recent of these use four-digit dates. Another problem is the Basic Input/Output System (BIOS) chip which tracks the century we're in. But the BIOS software will sometimes fail to do this, so you'll need to update it by visiting the relevant Web site and downloading a patch.

You'll need to know some information about your BIOS, either from the manufacturer of your PC, or by keeping an eye on the text that appears when you boot up – you can do this by using Y2K BIOS checking software or by opening up the metal box and looking at the motherboard.

The Net can help you solve far more than just Internet-related Y2K problems. Microsoft has had to admit, rather embarrassingly, that Windows 98 contains some double-digit disasters. But you don't have to chase your supplier for a fix, or hang on the Microsoft tech support phone lines waiting for advice.

You can fix your version of Windows at **www.windowsupdate.com**. Alternatively, select the Windows Update option from the Start/Settings menu – this'll take you to the appropriate site and automatically update your problem areas.

From the browser side

As an Internet user, you might be concerned that everything is going to come crashing down around your head on 1 January. But don't worry – you've got more chance of winning the lottery than that happening.

Your modem shouldn't be affected by the bug as it doesn't have a built-in clock – it doesn't need to know what the time is. But check out the manufacturer's Web site if you want to be absolutely certain – some of the fax software that's bundled with modems might be a problem, for instance. A good starting point for this is 56K Com (**www.56k.com**), which has plenty of links to the modem sites.

Your ISP is a weak link in the Y2K chain, and while most of them have already run their own compliancy tests, it doesn't hurt to check for some self assurance. After all, AOL, the world's

Photography by Frank Rodgers

largest ISP, apparently only began its Y2K hardware testing in January this year – so make sure your ISP isn't leaving it even later.

A bigger potential problem lies with the increasingly complex browser clients used for Web access. But unless you're using a really ancient version of Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator, you should be safe (but if you're still using an old version, now is the time to get your upgrade). According to Netscape's Year 2000 site (**http://home.netscape.com/products/year2000/index.html**), all of its current, full release client and server products are Y2K-compliant.

Microsoft's site (**www.microsoft.com/technet/year2K**) is also on top of things with an impressive Y2K online resource centre. Go to **www.microsoft.com/technet/year2k/product/product.htm** and select a product to assess its Y2K compliance status.

Alternatively, you can download Microsoft's Product Analyzer from **www.microsoft.com/technet/year2k/pca/pca.htm**. This scans your system for Microsoft products and produces a Y2K report. A wizard makes it simple to use, and you can view the HTML report within your browser.

Click on any program that's identified as non-compliant or compliance unknown, and it takes you to a more detailed section of the report – this includes a link to the Microsoft product compliance database where you can check the latest compliance issues.

Opera's browser, the most popular alternative to Netscape and Explorer, says it's compliant from version 3 onwards.

Email clients are also up to speed – Eudora says it doesn't anticipate any problems with any version of Eudora Pro, Eudora Light, Eudora Internet Mail Server (EIMS), Eudora WorldMail server, PureVoice or QPOPPER software, or Eudora Planner 4 for Windows.

Don't forget to check your Web editing software, although it's unlikely that any of the major packages will give you cause for concern. It's also prudent to visit the information site of the ISP or company that hosts your Web pages. You'll want to be assured that the Web servers it uses are compliant, and that it's run Y2K risk assessment and compliancy programs. And finally on the software front, check all the shareware that you've installed onto your system.

You'll be glad you coughed up the shareware fee when you find that registered users get Y2K upgrades. Check the developer's Web site for information – if a piece of shareware is a weak link in the compliance chain, get rid of it rather than compromising your otherwise stable system.

OS UPGRADE SITES

Microsoft Windows 95, 98, NT
www.microsoft.com/technet/year2K
IBM OS/2 and PC DOS
www.ibm.com/ibm/year2000
Linux
http://www.uk.linux.org/mbug.html

Inside the Internet

Surely the Internet won't come to a grinding halt because of the two-digit date confusion? After all, the Net began as a military communications network capable of surviving a nuclear war. No single part of the network is more important than the whole, so there's no central exchange point.

If part of the network took a direct hit by a nuclear bomb, the Internet wouldn't fail – it might slow down as information re-routes through different paths, but it wouldn't stop working.

The one area that's drawn sceptical comment from some quarters of the Internet industry is the potential for a DNS (Domain Name System) disaster, regarding the serial numbers used to synchronise domain data between name servers.

On the internet in seconds.

Find your book in seconds.

Order your book in seconds.

Go back for seconds.

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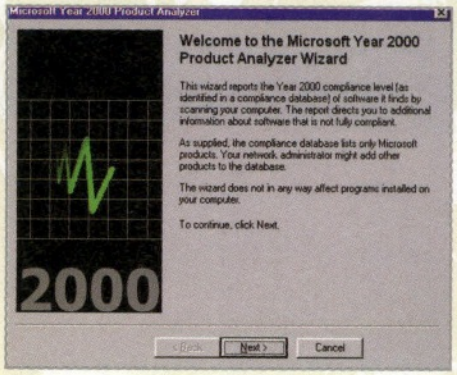
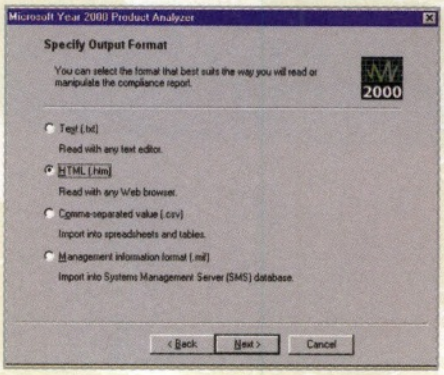
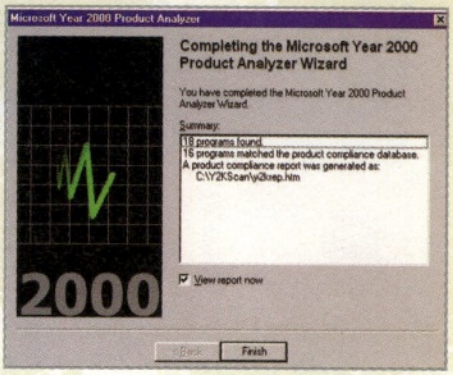
books for everyone

Amazon.co.uk is the exciting new way to shop for books on the internet. It's fast, convenient, secure and easy too. You can find the book you want in seconds from a selection of over 1.5 million titles and with up to 40% savings. We can even gift-wrap. Our online store is open 24 hours a day throughout the year, so you can shop when it suits you.

www.amazon.co.uk







Microsoft's Product Analyzer is a download from its Web site that'll check all the MS software on your system for Y2K compliance

Every domain name has the relevant data stored on at least two DNS servers (primary and secondary). If one fails, the other takes over – the Internet is pretty good at creating these redundancy measures. The secondary server contacts the primary server and gets a serial number for the current DNS data. If the serial number is different to the one it knows about, it'll request an updated copy of the DNS database for that domain.

These serial numbers are unsigned 32-bit numbers, ranging from 0 to a maximum of 4,294,967,296. They can be open to a Y2K problem because some domain administrators use the date of the last change (an encoded date) to create the serial number.

So, for instance, a serial number of 991231 (1999/December/31) might change on 1 Jan to become 000101, which could lead to compliance problems. The authors of RFC 1912, which deals with DNS, recommend using serial numbers with a full year, month and date, together with a double-digit sequence to allow for more than one change in a single day.

Using our example, 1999123101 would become 2000010101 and Y2K compliant. As long as your domain administrator knows this, there's no need for concern. Despite some scare mongering, it seems realistic to expect some DNS problems, but nothing that'll dramatically affect Internet operations.

The Internet Engineering Task Force's (IETF) Y2K Working Group started its millennium mission way back in February 1997. It's final report on the state of Internet protocols was published in January this year. It concluded that the Internet is in good condition as far as the year 2000 is concerned, and there's no need for any panic. It discovered that only a handful of the 2000 technologies tested were vulnerable, and limited to old implementations. The full details can be found online at **www.ietf.org/internet-drafts/draft-ietf-2000-issue-06.txt**.

Conclusion

The sheer speed of the technological evolution of the Net will ultimately be its saviour as far as the millennium bug is concerned. Think about it – how many times have you upgraded your Web browser just to keep up with the pace of development on the Web?

Not many of you will still be using the text-only Lynx client as we approach 2000. But the evolutionary effect goes much deeper than just the browser surface skin of the Net – email, file transfer, and even the software used to initiate and maintain your Net connections have all been subject to the same upgrade cycle.

If you think you've been upgrading a lot lately, spare a thought for your ISP. In order to keep up, it's had to embark on a schedule of hardware upgrades of increasing magnitude. The fact that your ISP has had to ensure scaleability means you don't have to worry, particularly if your hardware and software was bought recently – less than a couple of years ago.

Remember that the Internet will not die. No matter what happens during the rollover into the next millennium, the Internet was built to survive much worse, and survive it will.

At worst, you might find your Net connection is a bit slower on New Year's Day 2000, but if you're as hung over as we intend to be, chances are you won't even notice. im

Davey Winder can contacted by email at waveydavey@happygeek.com

BIOS UPGRADE SITES

American Megatrends
www.megatrends.com
AsusTeK
www.asus.com.tw
Intel
www.intel.com
Award/Phoenix
www.phoenix.com/year2000
Supermicro
www.supermicro.com

Y2K TROUBLESHOOTER

Assessment

- Create an inventory of your system components, including all your hardware and software
- Identify the manufacturers of each component, together with their serial number and installation date
- Use the Internet to search for the Web sites of each manufacturer or software developer
- Visit each site and check for compliance notices for each item. If none are present on the site, use the email facilities to request the relevant information
- Back up all your important data *before* you run any Y2K tests or install any upgrades
- Make use of any Y2K testing and compliance resources that are provided on the Web, such as Microsoft's Product Analyzer, and the test utilities and browser updates that you can find online or on our cover CDs

Solutions

- Do nothing more if your assessment shows your system has a clean bill of health – switching off your PC during the rollover to the year 2000 is also a sensible precaution
- Upgrade any hardware or software that's non-compliant, use the manufacturer's suggested patches and fixes
- Start afresh – if you've been delaying buying a new PC or new software, now's the time to do it. Most recent PCs are Y2K compliant, but you should get a written warranty anyway. Upgrade to software that's known to be compliant

With so many PCs having an 'Intel processor inside', it's worth keeping an eye on the Intel Web site for Y2K news

Make sure your IBM products are up to scratch – the IBM Year 2000 site offers all the assistance you need

ESSENTIAL Y2K SURVIVAL SITES

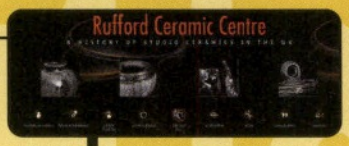
www.bug2000.co.uk
www.nety2k.org
www.year2000.com
www.year2000news.com

YELL UK WEB

and the nomin

The entrants have been narrowed down to 100 nominations, each one in the running for a UK Web Award, and awaiting the judges' deliberation. Here's your chance to take a look at the best of British on the Web

Here are the top 10 nominated sites for the 10 categories in the Yell UK Web Awards 1999. A panel of expert judges will now look at each site in great detail before meeting to praise and critique them; then persuade and cajole each other in a bid to find 10 winners and an overall Site of the Year. Read the results in full, plus behind-the-scenes reports on how the winning sites were built, only in the August issue of *Internet Magazine*, on sale 23 July.



Most Innovative Use of the Web

Channel 5 **www.channel5.co.uk**
Ford Racing **www.fordracing.net**
Genie **www.genie.co.uk**
Lion Head **www.lionhead.co.uk**
Parkminster Charterhouse **www.parkminster.org.uk**
Rufford Ceramic Centre **www.ruffordceramiccentre.org.uk**
Southbank International School **www.southbank.org.uk**
SSEYO Koan **www.sseyo.com**
Technosphere **www.technosphere.org.uk**
VRtually There **www.panpix.co.uk**

Best Commercial Web Site (business to business)

Bluegoose **www.bluegoose.co.uk**
Business & Consumer Mailing Lists Online **www.mailing-labels.com**
Digital Vision **www.digitalvision.ltd.uk**
Global Teamwork "Questioning the Balance" **www.globalteamwork.com/balance**
Inchcape Shipping Services Online **www.inchcape-shipping.com**
Ling Demolition **www.ling-demolition.co.uk**
Modelagency **www.modelagency.net**
Netbanx **www.netbanx.com**
Pixel **www.pixelcreative.co.uk**
Subnet New Media **www.subnet.co.uk**

Best Commercial Web Site (consumer)

Matinee **www.matinee.co.uk**
Amtico Flooring **www.amtico.co.uk**
Ski Club of Great Britain **www.skiclub.co.uk**
Dulux **www.dulux.com/uk**
Hi-Tec Sports **www.hi-tecsports.co.uk**
Mynutrition **www.mynutrition.co.uk**
Great North Eastern Railway **www.gner.co.uk**
Clickworks **www.clickworks.co.uk**
Beetle **www.newbeetle.co.uk**
Lastminute.com **www.lastminute.com**

Best Web Site from a Non-profit Making Organisation

BTA Walking Britain **www.visitbritain.com/walking**
Dome2000 **www.dome2000.co.uk**
Epping Breast Unit **www.eppingbreast.ndirect.co.uk**
Factory Watch **www.foe.co.uk/factorywatch**
Farnborough Abbey **www.farnboroughabbey.org**
Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester **www.msim.org.uk**
Public Record Office **www.pro.gov.uk**
Spywatch **www.bbc.co.uk/education/lookandread**
The Hill View Homepage **www.sunderland.com/hillview**
The Refugee Council **www.refugeecouncil.org.uk**

AWARDS 1999

ations are...!

Best Personal Web Site

Alisha's Attic **www.kig.co.uk/alisha**
Arsenal World **www.arsenal-world.com**
Artis – Thames Coffee House **come.to/kodkod**
Birds in a Cheshire Garden **www.abcissa.force9.co.uk/birds**
Chopstix **www.chopstix.co.uk**
Designer-info **www.designer-info.com**
Eye on the Net **www.lilli.clara.net**
Holby City Hospital **www.holby-city.freeserve.co.uk**
InconstantMoon **www.inconstantmoon.com**
NewForms – Global Underground **www.new-forms.demon.co.uk**

Best Entertainment Web Site

Ford Racing **www.fordracing.net**
Jamba **www.jamba.co.uk**
Museum of Science & Industry in Manchester **www.msim.co.uk**
What's on Stage **www.whatsonstage.**
BBC **www.bbc.co.uk**
Club 247 **www.club247.com**
Nestle Ventura **www.nestleventura.co.uk**
New Woman **www.newwomanonline.co.uk**
Rapido TV **www.rapido.co.uk**
Unsigned Music **www.unsigned-music.com**

Best Consumer E-commerce Web Site

Condoms UK **www.condomsdirect.co.uk**
Duntisbourne **www.duntisbourne.com**
Filmworld **www.filmworld.co.uk**
Game-online **www.game-online.com**
MagicWorld **www.magicworld.co.uk**
Manchester Utd Online Megastore shop.**manutd.com**
Mynutrition **www.mynutrition.co.uk**
Orange **www.uk.orange.net**
Quixell **www.qxl.com**
Scotch Corner **www.scotch-corner.co.uk**

Best Youth Web Site

Cartoon Network **www.cartoon-network.co.uk**
Cheestrings **www.cheestrings.co.uk**
GCSE Bitesize **www.bbc.co.uk/education/revision**
Jamba **www.jamba.co.uk**
Madforit – interactive travel guide to Manchester **www.madforit.com**
Nestle Ventura **www.nestleventura.co.uk**
Nick News **www.nicknews.co.uk**
Tayside Police Drugsaware **www.drugsaware.net**
The Official 5ive Web Site **www.5ive.co.uk**
The Sheep Shed **www.c-cooke.freeserve.co.uk**

Internet Magazine Readers' Choice

The readers of this magazine have also voted for their favourite site. Voting via the Yell Web site (**www.yell.co.uk**) and by post, readers chose the winner in this special category. The winner will be announced next month.

Best Community Web Site

Adur Online **www.adur.co.uk**
Arsenal World **www.arsenal-world.com**
AVERTing AIDS **www.avert.org**
Chinatown Online **www.chinatown-online.co.uk**
Maidenbower Virtual Village **www.maidenbower.org.uk**
MerseyWorld **www.merseyworld.com**
Poole Borough Council **www.poole.gov.uk**
Red Mole **www.redmole.co.uk**
Suffolk County Council **www.suffolkcc.gov.uk**
UK MUMS **www.ukmums.co.uk**

Best Content Provider

BBC Online **www.bbc.co.uk**
FT.com **www.ft.com**
ITN **www.itn.co.uk**
Official Manchester United Website **www.manutd.com**
Patient UK **www.patient.co.uk**
Popcorn **www.popcorn.co.uk**
Simplyfood **www.simplyfood.co.uk**
Ski Club of Great Britain **www.skiclub.co.uk**
The Scotsman **www.scotsman.com**
Digireels **www.digireels.co.uk**

Site of the Year

The ultimate accolade – the overall site of the year – will be chosen from the winners of the categories.

Hands-on Internet solutions with a choice of reliable connections

U-NET is a major ISP with the resources to deliver fast and reliable Internet connections.

Over 30,000 customers enjoy the practical solutions available through our acclaimed range of Internet access products.

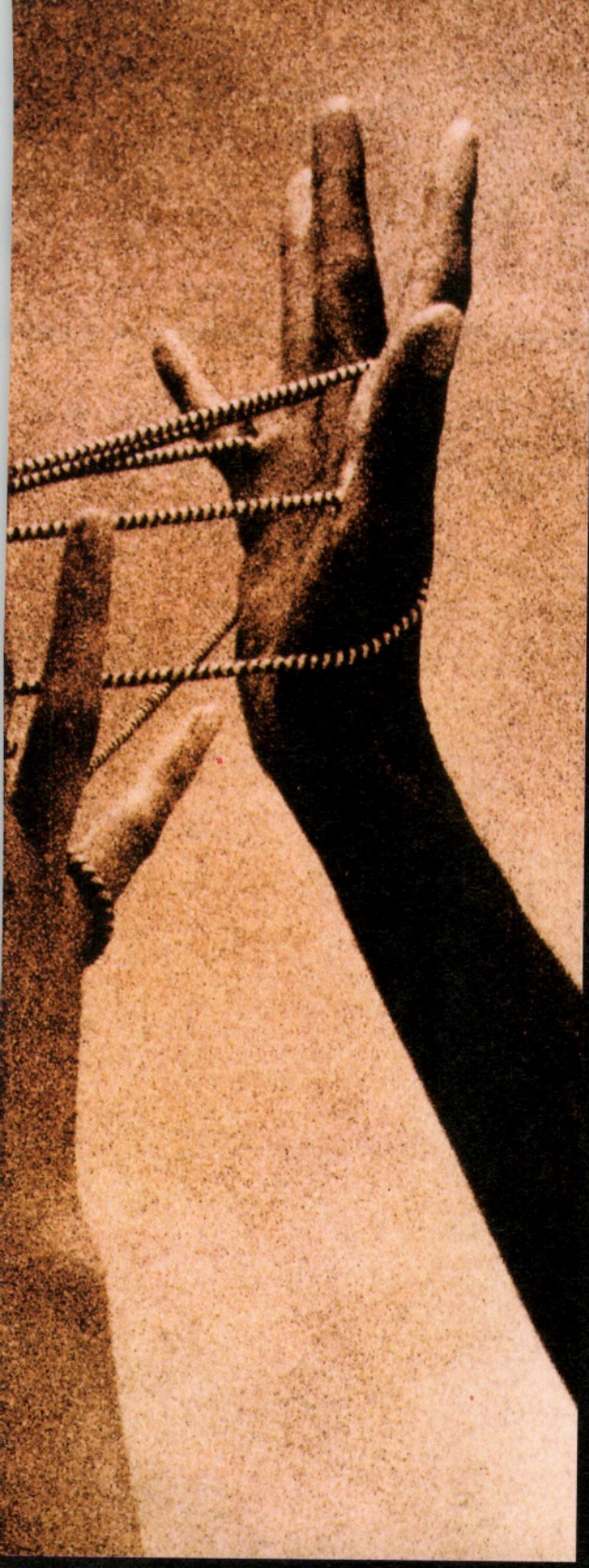
Through sustained reinvestment comes peace of mind in the shape of an ISP with its own resilient backbone and impressive capability.

For individuals and businesses of every type and size, the net result is a choice of hands-on solutions from an ISP with all the right connections.

U-NET has a range of products which gives you the flexibility to find an Internet service to suit your needs. From a standard dial up account through to the ultimate business package, a permanent leased line, U-NET can give you the tools to present a comprehensive professional image.

Our Free Mail Forwarding offer means that you can use your own domain as part of your email address e.g. sales@supercarsports.co.uk. Plus, it means you can drop your @hotmail address.

U-NET BELIEVES IN DOMAINS FOR ALL. LOOK AT OUR REMARKABLE PRODUCTS AND TAKE ADVANTAGE.



NOW WITH MAIL FORWARDING FREE

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Our high quality full featured dial up service.

NEW *You can now use a domain name to give your web space a more professional image for an extra £10 per month, or £100 per year. The charges for .uk domain names have been reduced from £60 to £40 for 2 years and to register a .com domain name will now be charged at the reduced rate of £50 for 2 years.

- 24 Hour, 365 days of the year support at LOCAL call rates ONLY
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FIFTY POUNDS OFF** £50 OFF FIFTY POUNDS OFF**

Easy Two IP
Hosting/webspace

The full featured web space service ideal for creating an advanced and sophisticated Internet presence.

- Dedicated expert web space support staff
- Hosted and managed server options
- Supports Java, Perl, CGI scripts, and MIME types such as Shockwave and Frontpage
- Weekly statistics and detailed analysis of your site
- Ample Bandwidth
- Expand up to 100Mbs

Easy Three IP
ISDN Access

The ISDN package ideal for a company's small Local Area Network (LAN), offering fast connection with a reliable and easy to use service but without permanent connection.

NEW *You can also use a domain name to personalise your EasyThree web space for an extra £10 per month or £100 per year. A .uk domain name will now cost you £40 for 2 years.

NOW WITH MAIL FORWARDING FREE

- Fast 64K or 128K access
- Share the connection among all the machines on a network
- Expert dedicated support team

Easy Four IP
Leased Line

A full range of permanent connections able to cater for every business' bandwidth requirements large or small, with the added reliability and security that U-NET can offer.

- UK and International leased line coverage ranging from 64K through to 34Mbs and 45Mbs
- Dedicated customer support
- National network of strategically placed PoP's
- International PoP's for connections to USA, Europe and South America
- Own Backbone guarantees quality service and resilient network
- Our managed router option comes with a FREE ISDN backup that ensures connectivity should your permanent circuit fail

U-NET

LOCAL TOUCH, GLOBAL REACH

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Tel: 0845 3308000 Fax: 01925 484466
Email: sales@u-net.net Web: http://www.u-net.net/

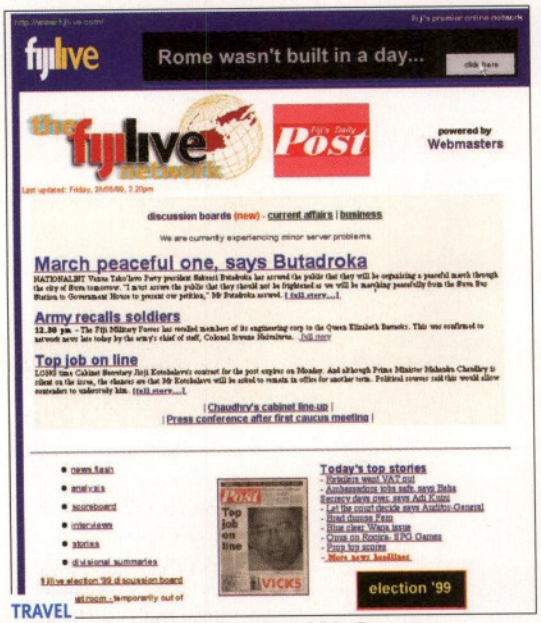
Cisco Powered Network

*.com domain names previously charged at $70 for 2 years.
**Was £30 per month or £300 per year. Has now been reduced to £25 per month or £250 per year.

UNET2040699 01

Essential Viewing

The Web is huge and money and only visit



TRAVEL

Packed full of Fiji facts

"Ni sa Bula" as they say in Fiji. Fiji Live is the South Pacific's largest site and represents quite a coup for the 322-island nation. This site will tell you anything you could possibly want to know about this country. You can see news from the islands' press or get the latest sports reports. There's a section on geography nestling alongside quality tourist information. You can also get weather reports, exchange rates and information on the local food. Fiji, here I come.

www.fijilive.com

"Set aside time to give your pet a thorough grooming" is the tip of the month at Pet Healthcare Services, the new pet insurance Web site. You can buy cover for your moggy or doggy from £10 a month. And advice on looking after your pet is available from either Sebastian the Labrador or Pickle the Siamese cat.

www.pethealthcare.co.uk

Once your pet's looking great, it's time to accessorize. Try Animail – the online pet store will supply you with everything from ergonomic dog feeders to rabbit harnesses and leads.

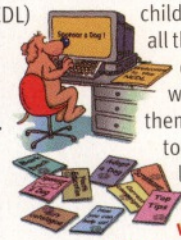
www.animail.co.uk

If you want to teach your old dog new tricks, Training Your Dog could help. This amazing site from LearnFree (**www.learnfree.com**) is a multimedia 'VidBook' of basic dog obedience lessons.

There are 33 pages of instructions – each with a video clip to help you achieve your goals, as well as photos and live demonstrations in streaming video. It's a useful site if you need to cure your canine's bad habits.

www.trainingyourdog.com

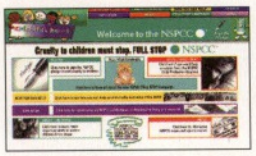
The National Canine Defence League (NCDL) heads up a pack of charities launching or relaunching on the Web this month. The NCDL's site is all-new, and gives you the chance to find out about what the charity does. You can adopt a dog online or download a funky 'It's a dog's life' screensaver.



www.ncdl.org.uk

The NSPCC's new site forms part of its shocking Full Stop campaign.Children can ask for help, and there's an online donation area.

www.nspcc.org.uk



Save the Children focuses on helping children in third world countries, but works all over the globe, creating a better future for children. Its site carries all the latest on the charity's good works, as well as themed sections on topics such as child labour and child soldiers.

www.savethechildren.org.uk

Cancer charity Marie Curie is always worthy of mention, and its new home page includes a moving 'messages of hope' section.

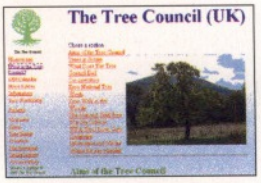
www.mariecurie.org.uk

Now summer's here, what better way to soak up all that British sun than by getting green-fingered with your petunias? Garden Living – fronted by Diarmuid Gavin from *Homefront* – is the new site from garden suppliers, Marshalls (**www.marshalls. co.uk**). There are hints and tips on organic gardening and even a patio planner so you can decide where to put your new dual-flame, gas-fired barbecue. No worries mate.

www.gardenliving.co.uk

On an arboreal note, the Tree Council has branched out onto the Web. All you could possibly want to know about trees and woodland can be found as you leaf through the site's Web pages. You can prepare for Tree Week in November or attend one of the many 'Trees Love Care' days during which you can plant a tree yourself.

www.treecouncil.org.uk



UTILITIES

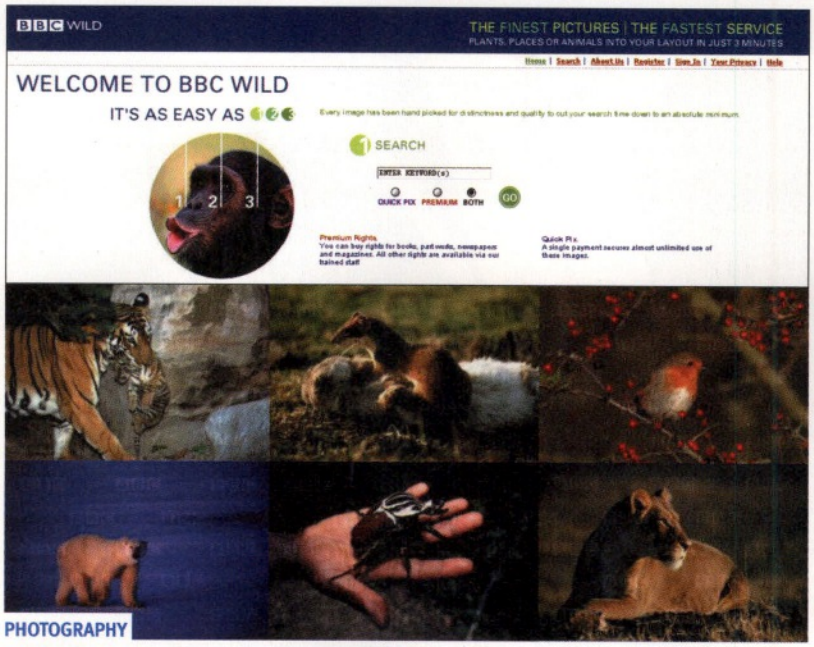
Where would we be without water?

This month Thames Water has launched its Water Wise campaign online. The aim is to avoid the need for hosepipe bans this summer. You can take a virtual tour of the ultimate Water Wise home accompanied by a hippo, an elephant and a talking watering can to see how you can do your bit to save water. Or if you're intent on sprinkling your garden 24 hours a day, check out the Millennium Dome recycling scheme that'll use rain water collected from the huge roof to flush its lavatories. Water performance!

www.thames-water.com/waterwise

eyor

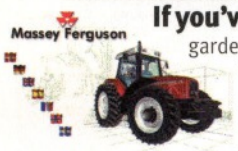
phone calls are expensive. So save time and this month's essential sites



PHOTOGRAPHY

Walk on the BBC Wild side

Over the years, the BBC (**www.bbc.co.uk**) has become synonymous with quality wildlife coverage – from *Zoo Quest* through *Wildlife on One* to Sir David Attenborough's excellent programmes. You can get some top quality animal images from BBC Wild – the commercial arm of the BBC's Natural History Unit. It's opened its picture library to the public. The collection has around 100,000 images and is available in a variety of formats and prices. You could buy the rights to premier price lioness picture above for £100.
www.bbcwild.co.uk



If you've got a garden that's the size of a small country, you might need a tractor. Massey Ferguson has some fine examples of agricultural vehicles on a dynamic site.
www.newtractor.com

The Health Education Authority recommends a visit to its sexual health Web site. You'll find advice on STDs (no, not the dialling codes), the location of your nearest health clinic and the LoveSaver screensaver. You can even watch an animation and learn how to put a condom on properly.
www.lovelife.hea.org.uk

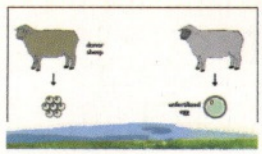
The British Dental Association (BDA) has launched a site to get your teeth into. This oral health information directory contains all the latest dental news, as well as general info. And as a special treat there are animated explanations of dental procedures. Ouch!
www.bda-dentistry org.uk

If you're madly in love but too shy to say so, Invisible Friend could help. Just tell the site who you fancy, and if they join and name you, Invisible Friend will bring you together for free!
www.invisiblefriend.com

Fashionow claims to be the world's most comprehensive couture portal, and it's got a lot to offer the dedicated follower of fashion. There are video clips of catwalk shows, forums where you can chat to other trendsetters in London, New York or Tokyo, and a bevvy of links and photos.
www.fashionow.com

There isn't much call for fashion in prison (unless it includes arrows on your suit). But if you've ever wondered what it's like inside, here's your chance to find out. The site has guides to every prison in the UK, along with visiting times and a great section on prison slang. Get virtually banged up and find out how to bum a burn from your pad mate.
www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk

Finally, in deference to our sheepish cover, you might want to take a look at PPL Therapeutics' home page. It's the firm responsible for Dolly, the sheep clone. It's an interesting site if you really want to know about nuclear transfer, so stop cloning about and get down there, Shep.
www.ppl-therapeutics.com



Why do they *do* that?

With the *Star Wars* hype almost gone – until Episode Two gets up a head of steam – you might want to bid a fond farewell by bonding with your *Star Wars* twin. This bizarre site asks you to take something akin to a psychometric test and then apportions percentage results for 'openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism'. These then relate to a character in the *Star Wars* universe. For example, if you get a high openness rating you share Yoda's characteristics. A low rating will find you compared to Boba Fett.
www.outofservice.com/starwars

Staying with the science fiction theme, this is the most bizarre site we've come across for a while. It starts off normally enough with a home page that warns you to say away from black holes. But if you're foolish enough to click on the black hole, you're plunged into complete blackness, occasionally interrupted by little messages saying things like 'We warned you' and 'I hope you're happy now'. Carlos A Pero – the bloke who created this Web space oddity – must have far too much time on his hands.
www.ravenna.com/blackhole.html

If you're concerned that you're missing church, PrayerWheel will say the prayer of your choice (choose from Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, Hindu or Islamic) using a scrolling Web page. It costs a mere 6p a day. What a godsend, you might be thinking. But read the disclaimer first. "We make no warranties or guarantees, or implied guarantees that the prayers will be heard or granted by God." The devil's always in the detail, isn't he.
www.prayerwheel.com

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SPOTLIGHT ON...

Four-wheeler dealing

Pundits say 20 per cent of all cars will be sold via the Internet by the year 2000. Gail Robinson looks at buying and selling your car online

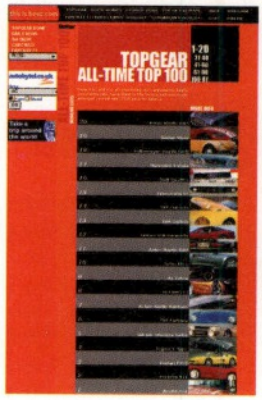
Do you feel a bit queasy at the thought of a salesman in a bad suit trying to flog you a secondhand Ford Fiesta? Surely the experience of buying a car would be easier and cheaper if you could do it from the comfort of your own home? No more trudging around car dealers on a Sunday afternoon when you could be enjoying a slap-up meal in your local Harvester.

Everything from your pre-purchase research on new cars, to cutting out the middleman and buying your car, can all be done on the Web. There's a plethora of auto Web sites where you can get the specs, read the latest reviews and check out trade prices. The Web is a real godsend if you're looking for a deal on a secondhand car. Searching an online database is much faster than trawling through the pages of *Loot*, *Exchange & Mart* and *Auto Trader* to compare prices and guess where the seller lives by their phone number.

Do your research

Before you leap into the world of classifieds, you might want to do some research. If you don't know your camshafts from your hose clamps, the Office of Fair Trading has a useful guide to buying a used car (**www.oft.gov.uk/html/cars/home.htm**). In an attempt to get us to sign up to its credit card, Goldfish (**www.goldfish.com**) has a range of car buying guides, which it'll send you for free. If you know what you're doing, check out the trade car prices at Parker's online (**www.parkers.co.uk**). It's also worth reading some reviews of your desired car to make sure you're not buying a turnip on wheels.

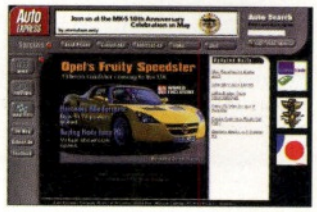
The excellent Top Gear site (**www.topgear.beeb.com**) has road test reviews with attitude. You'll also find



QuickTime tours around the cars, the 100 top models of all time (the Mini is number one) and endless specs.

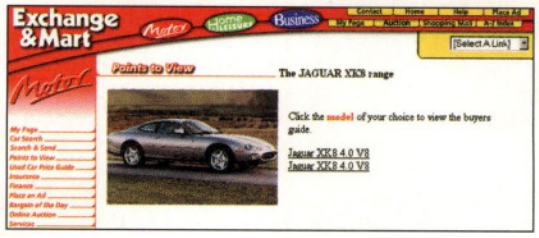
Buying a secondhand car

The king of the car classifieds has to be Auto Trader (**www.autotrader.co.uk**). Over 160,000 cars go on sale on the Web site every week, supplemented by 5,000 dealers and garages listing their wares. A useful feature lets you specify how far you're willing to travel to find your car, such as a 10-mile radius of your postcode area. You get all the usual car selling info, plus colour pics with many of the ads, links to *Top Gear* reviews, details on insurance costs from Screentrade (**www.screentrade.co.uk**) and the latest finance deals from Alliance & Leicester (**www.alliance-leicester.co.uk**).



Coming a close second for the range of cars on sale is the Exchange & Mart at **www.exchangeandmart.co.uk**. It claims there are 100,000 cars for sale on the site, which you can search by region, price range and manufacturer. There are links to more information from Auto Express (**www.autoexpress.co.uk**), where you can get road test details and the latest specs. You could even grab a bargain in Exchange & Mart's online auction.

The old favourite, Loot (**www.loot.com**), is always worth a try if you're bargain hunting. You'll find more than 25,000 car ads in the



What Car? Online

What Car?'s online database is packed full of the latest information on models and prices. It's a great place to start your car research, and you can even compare the specs of different cars. Car valuations come courtesy of the *What Car?* used car price guide. If you're after a new car, the site will find your closest dealer. You can order brochures and even make an appointment for a test drive. You'll also find a section for classified car ads.

www.whatcar.co.uk

British Car Auctions

If you fancy yourself as a bit of an Arthur Daley, you could look for a bargain from a car auction. The biggest is British Car Auctions where, once you've registered, you'll find a list of current stock and details of where the auctions are held. There's a section on classic car auctions, and even the opportunity to snap up some MoD cast-offs, though sadly no armoured cars or tanks were available.

www.british-car-auctions.co.uk

site surveyor

On the Road section. The search options are limited though, and you're not getting the breadth of choice of Exchange & Mart or Auto Trader.

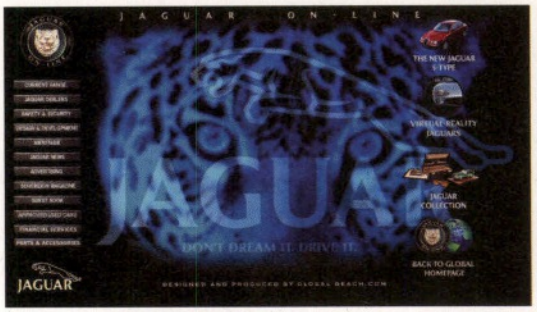
Carseller (**www.carseller.co.uk**) is a more modest classified ads site with a smaller selection of cars. You can search by area and price, but the backup information is minimal.

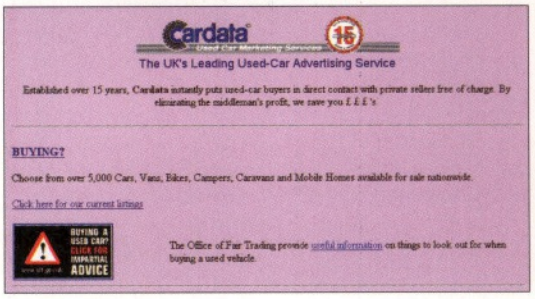
I'm in the market for a Ford Ka (I know it's a typical girlie car, but I like it) so I searched all the databases. Top of the league was Auto Trader, with 212 Kas. A close second was Exchange & Mart with 197. What Car? managed 67, and Loot came up with a mere 24. Cardata gave me a choice of 17, and Carseller found a paltry six.

If you're after an 'almost new' Ford, try checking out Bristol Street's Web site (**www.go-bsb.co.uk**). The Ford dealer claims to offer cars at cost or trade prices.

Many of the car manufacturers' sites also hold databases of approved used cars culled from their main dealers. Those with big money to spend should check out BMW (**www.bmw.co.uk**) for a good selection of models. Landed gentry could go straight to the lovely Jaguar site (at **www.jaguar.co.uk**). Volkswagen (**www.volkswagen.co.uk**) has a list of approved dealers, as does the Mercedes site at **www.mercedes-benz.co.uk**. And for all your Lada needs, visit Lada UK (**http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/ladauk/index.htm**).

Or choose a car with a bit of personality – one you're willing to lavish love, time and money on. The Classic Car Mart (**www.classic-car-mart.co.uk**) has around 1,000 cars for sale in its database, some going back to the 1930s. You'll also find a reasonable selection at **http://cars.classics.co.uk**.

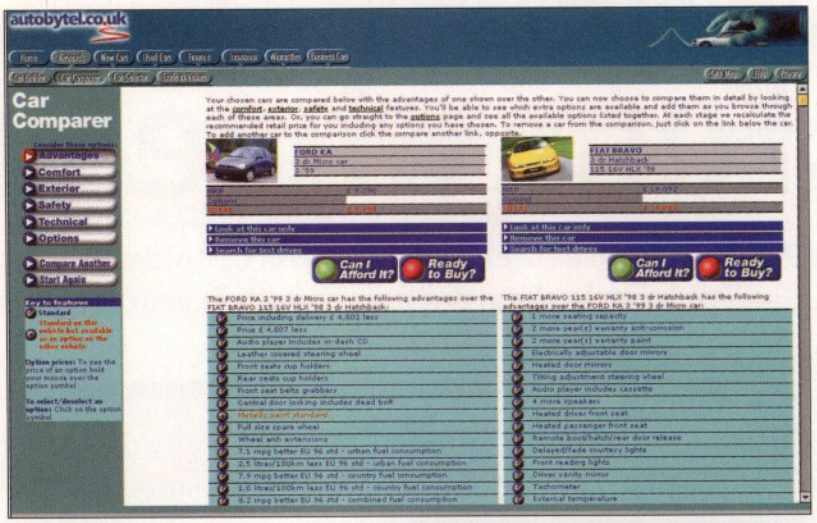




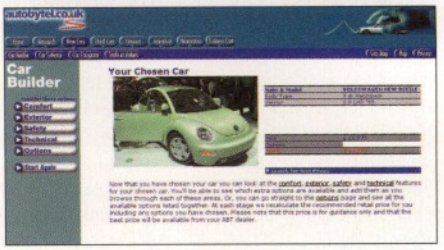
Cardata

Cardata bills itself as the "UK's leading used car advertising service", but its selection of 5,000 cars for sale isn't that impressive. The site attracts around 40,000 buyers and sellers every month. To place an ad until your car is sold will cost you £69.99. But if the buyer of your car uses Cardata to finance their purchase, you'll get £50 back. What's more, if you don't sell your car within two weeks, Cardata will give you a free weekend break for two.

www.cardata.co.uk



Autobytel



Autobytel is a new site aimed at the serious car buyer and it's a great place to do your research. It's been up and running in the US since 1995, and has received 1.5 million purchase requests. You can get details of makes and models, plus news on special offers from manufacturers. Specify your make, model and any special requests, and Autobytel promises to get you a competitive price. But be cautious about placing a purchase request online – an Autobytel dealer will call you within 24 hours, so make sure you're ready to buy.

www.autobytel.co.uk

Buying a new car

You can start your search for new cars in the Car section of Yahoo! (**http://cars.uk.yahoo.com**). Most of its data comes from **www.new-car-net.co.uk**, a guide to every new car available in the UK.

The car mags have been raving about the Subaru Impreza for months, but if you don't fancy joining a 12-month waiting list, check out Worldwide Car Imports (**www.carimports.com**). It specialises in importing sports and luxury cars (new and used) into the UK from Japan, and there's one Impreza for sale.

Once you've got your car sorted, the next step is to get the best insurance deal. There are hundreds of sites where you can compare prices (**www.carquote.co.uk**, **www.simplydirect.co.uk**, **www.admiral-insurance.co.uk** and **www.theinsurancecentre.co.uk**).

Now get your car on the road and experience some delightful traffic jams. Get the latest on the clogged up M25 at **www.theaa.co.uk** and **www.rac.co.uk**.

Selling your car

You've really got to put your ad in Auto Trader – it's the biggest motoring Web site in the UK. There were 5.09 million pages downloaded from the site in October 98. Surely one of those people will want to buy your 1975 pea green Ford Anglia? The price for a two-week ad on the Web site is only a fiver.

One week on the Exchange & Mart site will cost you £3+ VAT. If you want to put your ad online and in the magazine, and advertise until your car is sold, it'll set you back £59+VAT.

What Car? charges £46.41. That gets you one ad on the site, another one on the What Car? Sky teletext service and a place in Autocar's cars for sale section. Fewer page impressions, though – just over two million.

And finally, Carseller (**www.carseller.co.uk**) will flog your car for free.

You don't want to catch something nasty!

Every day many organisations suffer huge financial losses due to inept security, this enables email or web born viruses to wreak havoc with valuable computer systems. Unfortunately infection is not the only problem faced by an unsuspecting business, they also have to fight against confidential information leaks, both deliberate and accidental, and stamp out the spread of libellous comments via email.

However by implementing content security, you can provide maximum protection from Internet-spread viruses, restrict network traffic to Internet sites deemed inappropriate in their networked environment, as well as ensure that all e-mail messages and their attachments are completely secured from point of origin, to final destination.

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SITE OF THE MONTH

What's on Channel 4?

When the UK's fourth terrestrial broadcaster launched on TV, it had new programmes, new ideas and lots of red warning triangles. Richard Dinnick finds out what's changed in 18 years

Channel 4 has always had a reputation for innovation. When it was decided that, as a TV medium, Channel 4 needed an overhaul and a branding redesign, the Web site naturally had to be included. While some pundits have found fault with the TV changes, the new designs seem to have breathed new life into a well-established Web site.

"We tried to incorporate the look and feel of Channel 4 on the site," says Jon Kingsbury of Channel 4's Interactive Media division. That meant a redesign courtesy of Bomb (**www.bomb.com**) – a breakaway group from Online Magic (now Agency.com). "It also gave us the opportunity to include some of the ideas we had about giving the viewers more information."

Grand designs

What will please visitors to this vast site – all 96,000 pages of it – is how fast the pages load. Channel 4's new ident graphic would have eaten up huge amounts of bandwidth if translated onto the Web. So Bomb came up with a static version. "The idea is that you welcome everyone," Kingsbury reasons. "Some things that work well on television are total crap on a Web site."

"We could have had a Flash home page," Kingsbury says. "But it's important that people can view it straightaway the first time they visit, otherwise they simply won't come back."

The site has to be a money spinner since Channel 4 doesn't have the luxury of the licence fee. And so, as in the broadcast world, advertising comes to the rescue. But on the Web this can be backed up by online sales. "The idea that you can't buy a *Queer as Folk* video direct from Channel4.com is ludicrous," Kingsbury adds. But he didn't want to bombard visitors with the sales spiel. "We've put in an e-commerce solution where people would expect to find it."

Whose site is it anyway?

A lot of the programme-based content was on the site before the redesign. But with the previous site the information had been put up on the Net in a more haphazard fashion. "Every time there was a new programme with new interest, it got added onto the old structure," recounts Kingsbury. "It was a case of bringing it all together more coherently. And that's what we did."

The first aspect of the site's content is fairly straightforward, and well executed. The likes of *Father Ted, Countdown, Lateline, Queer as Folk, Time Team* and a host of the channel's other most popular shows all get a few pages, a forum and an online identity. "There are 10 forums specifically geared to let people talk about their favourite programmes," Kingsbury tells me earnestly. "It's a good way to build communities and a good way of getting free content for us!"

But this community-building lets Kingsbury and the team from Bomb make TV seem far more interactive.

Site Of The Month

Channel 4

Designers
Bomb

Development time
Five months "We hit the revamp cosmetically on 2 April. We launched the full site about a month later."

Development costs
"Channel 4 is committed to an online presence, so it's an ongoing investment. We have maintenance contract with Bomb. The redesign cost fits into that contract."

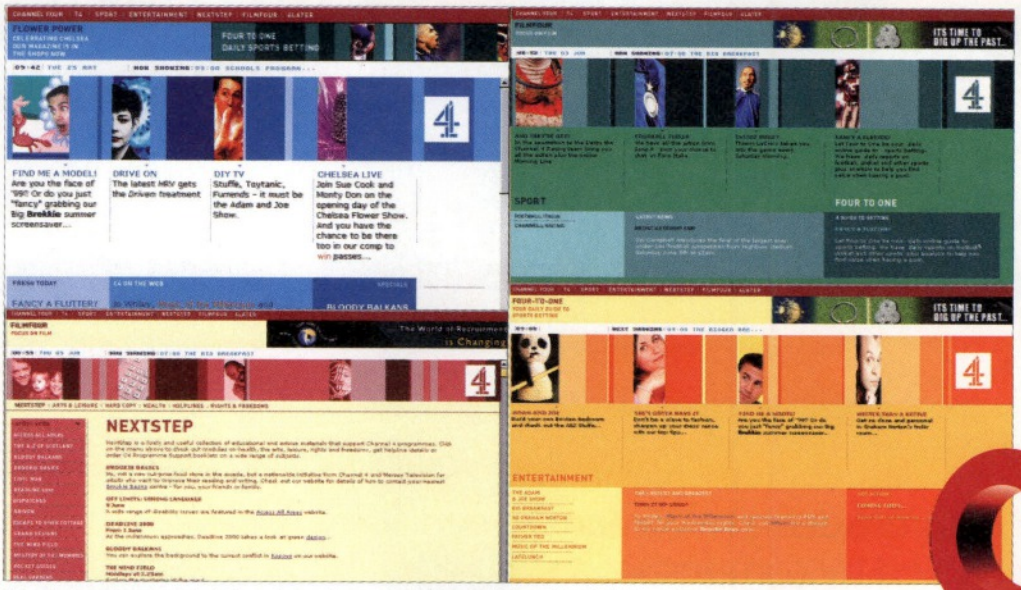
URL
www.channel4.com

The Channel 4 site devotes individual pages to the channel's most popular shows, as well as grouping programmes such as in the 4 Later section

"We're planning to do three online chats a week. At the beginning of the targeted programme – *Equinox*, say – there'll be an announcement saying that if you want to go online afterwards you can talk to the director, the producer or the star. That gives us added value and brings us closer to our viewers."

But all this is not just to bolster Channel 4's image. "We're duty bound by the Independent Television Commission to provide a certain amount of backup and support material to the TV shows. This material says that, yes we're producing that material, yes it's online, yes this is what Channel 4 is all about – we're a public service broadcaster, we have to make that material available."

Partnerships have been forged with Ginger Media to provide *TFI Friday* content, and there are plans to expand the existing *Brookside* area in conjunction with the team at Brookie (**www.brookie.com**). So, the content's pretty much what you'd expect, with a few surprises thrown in for good measure. "That's why people should come back to the Channel 4 site as often as possible," enthuses Kingsbury. "You never know what's going to



The site's sections are clearly branded as Channel 4, before splitting off into individual programme pages

SITE OF THE MONTH

happen – because we can be dynamic. We can surprise."

There are also plans to give regular visitors the chance to opt into an email newsletter. Kingsbury is keen to get this right, though, and won't launch it until he's completely satisfied with the mailing mechanism. "The important thing is that we deepen and strengthen our relationship with our viewers, not bombard them with junk mail."

Home improvement

Kingsbury and his team have also added new content that doesn't necessarily relate to any Channel 4 TV programme. They've seem to have achieved a happy medium between established identity and the need for Net specific content – something broadcasters and magazine publishers strive for.

"We've been commissioning services that hold a sense of Channel 4," continues Kingsbury. "It's got to be innovative, exciting, new, interesting, informative and intelligent." Not a tall order in any way, then? "No. When you arrive on the Channel 4 Web site, it's clearly branded, but as you delve deeper, you get into the look and feel of individual programmes."

One such new section of the site is the Four to One sports section. With Channel 4's history of televising niche sports, the idea here is to put a spin on mainstream sport. As a broadcaster, that is what Channel 4 has always done. "We don't need to compete with Soccernet (**www.soccernet.com**)," says Kingsbury. "There's simply no point, as it wouldn't reflect what Channel 4 is about."

Instead, the approach to sport – all sport – is from the angle of betting. There is no online betting, but you can find out the odds on any sporting event from the Cricket World Cup (not part of Channel 4's remit) to horse racing (core to the broadcaster's proposition).

This touches on an aspect of broadcasters' sites that fascinates Kingsbury. "If we can't get coverage, we'll have verbage," he explains. "We'll talk about stuff rather than show it." And as far as Channel 4 is concerned, this is a definite advantage. "It can make up for the more common, mindless coverage."

Friends

The natural extension of treating the site as a separate broadcaster is to commission independent third parties to produce programming for it. Kingsbury takes up the story: "We're keen for the C4 site to become a hotbed of innovation," he says. "Channel 4 is a commissioner of content – be it on TV or the Web. So we want to commission content from a variety of sources. We have already been approached by Web design companies, creators and producers who want to do innovative things on our site."

This amazing idea – a natural progression from employing up and coming TV production companies such as Tiger Aspect and Hat Trick – is already being implemented. For example, the FilmFour Web site, which comes under the Channel 4 umbrella, is produced jointly with a separate company called Your Show Productions. And this springboard for new talent doesn't stop at design. The site's chat room software is built by Codehammer (**www.codehammer.com**) and maintained by Star Productions (**www.star.co.uk**).

"We've worked with Form Design (**www.form.uk.uk**) and for our backup ITC-based material, we work with a company called Broadcasting Support Services (**www.bss.org**)," explains Kingsbury. Obviously, his team is already in bed with the TV production companies that also produce Web sites such as Ginger Media (**www.goginger.com**) and those that plan to launch soon, such as Planet 24.

So the message is if your Web design agency is a shooting star such as Bomb, you should get in contact with Channel 4 immediately – but only if you've got a great idea. "Channel 4 desperately wants to be approached by companies with creative ideas, and if the ideas are good enough, we'll match their people up with our people who can take the ideas through to fruition."

"The people contributing to the Web site today are the programme makers of tomorrow," he argues. "Those programme makers of tomorrow have high expectations of what you can do on the Web." This is why it's crucial for Channel 4 to be acting as a pathfinder for this convergence." And with its newly overhauled site, the broadcaster has made a giant leap closer to achieving that goal. im

What the professionals think

Duncan Abel, creative director, Fish Design
The whole site looks fresh and calm; powerful and purposeful. The *Big Breakfast* represents the individual programme links, continuing and cleverly conveying the nature and theme of the show. But it took me a while to find listings. I'm a little surprised that Flash hasn't been further exploited, but the site seems a little sluggish, so perhaps that's just as well. The weighting of the information seems confused, but I've no complaints about its extent. The new design is more professional than the old one, and it's encouraging to see the non-Net branding being used well online.
www.fishdesign.com

Ajaz Ahmed, MD, AKQA
The site doesn't have enough 'indispensable content' – stuff I can't get anywhere else or that would make me come back for more. I'd also like to see an online subscription facility for the FilmFour channel. These grumbles aside, I like the news-style ticker displaying what programme's on next. I don't get the chance to watch much TV, but it got me thinking that I should! At the time I was in a football mood and again the site didn't disappoint. The Football Italia content was good, as was the rest of the sport section. Now the site needs to secure some serious ad revenue so that more content can be developed.
www.akqa.com

Margaret Manning, commercial director, Reading Room
Channel 4's new Web site is stuffed full of interesting content and imaginative competitions. It's bound to appeal to its intended audience. The use of technology is both appropriate and entertaining. I particularly liked the trail sprite in the *So Graham Norton* section! The front page is slightly overwhelming and, to begin with, the navigation appears confusing. But, as you move between the sections of the site, it becomes a matter of intuition. The design can even be viewed adequately on 640x480 screen resolution, which is a bonus. I will certainly be revisiting.
www.rroom.co.uk

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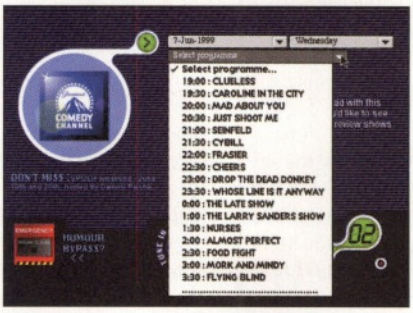
BEHIND THE SCENES...

Top sites for July

Experts tell us how this month's top sites were built. Get the lowdown on the products webmasters use, the inside track on site budgets and tips on how to use the latest technologies

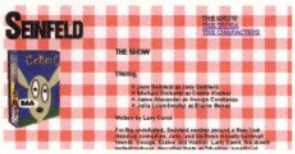
Paramount Comedy Channel

Can the cable channel that makes sure you're never short of a laugh come up with the definitive online comedy directory?



From early evening until the early hours, the Paramount Comedy Channel livens up the cable listings with continuous repeats of US favourites such as *Frasier*, *Cheers* and *Seinfeld*, alongside British contenders like *Drop the Dead Donkey* and *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* The site was launched in mid-April and has drawn 85,000 hits so far.

The site was designed by Razorfish, and created so that Paramount could maintain it in-house. There are plans for development, with the promise of online chats with the stars of the shows. "We wanted to create a televisual site that was as close to the on-air experience as possible," explains Mike Wallace, creative consultant at Razorfish. "You even have to change channels to navigate the site."



Like the channel, the site exists on and off air. While Paramount is broadcasting, active server pages check the time so that the site greets you with a test card highlighting which show is on air. As well as schedules and cable availability information, you can delve deeper for trivia on the actors in the shows (currently only available for its top six titles).

While the channel is off air, you'll find *Time Out* listings for comedy acts and venues in London, as well as forthcoming episode highlights and a space to voice your opinions on Paramount's output.

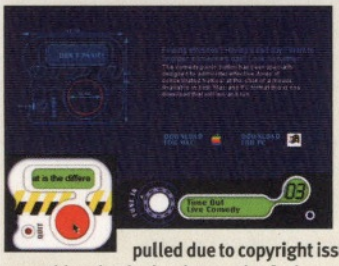
At the moment, the site could be accused of merely indulging the trainspotter, but the playful layout, combined with Paramount's enthusiasm, makes it a good online guide to some of the finest comedy talent available.

Mark Whitehead

www.paramountcomedy.co.uk
Design ★★★★☆
Content ★★★☆☆

YOU MUST BE JOKING
ComedyZone www.comedyzone.beeb.com
Seinfeld www.Seinfeld.com
Funny www.funny.co.uk

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?



Download the Comedy Panic Button from the site onto your desktop, and it'll be ready to inject humour at any dull moment. Originally developed to include sound and graphics, many clips had to be pulled due to copyright issues. "We needed something that had an interactive feel, so we used Macromedia Director," says Ian MacDowell, technical solutions manager at Razorfish. "Director is graphically rich, so it's also easy to update – you just load another text file."

Leisurehunt

Making online hotel booking as simple as it should be

Launched in 1996, Leisurehunt is almost a veteran of the booming but adolescent travel industry. It has a list of 70,000 establishments on its electronic books and confirmed hotel room bookings at the site are approaching £100,000 a month.

Experience might come with age, but it doesn't come cheap. Leisurehunt has spent £1 million on its electronic booking system.

Many travel sites are merely front ends for banks of telephone operators, but Leisurehunt is adamant that its SpeedBook operation will provide a complete Internet central reservations facility.

Simply enter your requirements and you'll get a list of available hotels that match your criteria. Booking a room in London or Edinburgh is a breeze – both have drop down menus. Towns as far afield as Bristol in the south west to Biggar in Lanarkshire are covered, but there's an unashamed abundance of Welcome Lodges.

The Leisurehunt search facility has already been called up for action. It earned its stripes after enabling 22 Norwegian submariners to book their shore leave while still at sea.

So should traditional travel agents be on the lookout? "You bet," says a delighted Steve Packard, chief executive of InferNet, Leisurehunt's parent company.

Paul Bennett

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

"People have graduated from surfing and want to transact on the Net," explains Tony Prior, commercial director at InferNet. "They want to search for a hotel, book and get confirmation immediately." The underlying technology of the site is unique geospatial data and software. InferNet owns a worldwide digital map of nearly three million cities, towns and villages. When a hotel is added, the system recognises the place name and puts it on the map. The same technology lists all the appropriate hotels nearest the customer's search point.

www.leisurehunt.com
Design ★★★☆☆
Content ★★★★☆

MORE GAS, FOOD AND LODGINGS
WebBreaks www.webreaks.co.uk
Stay Here www.stayhereuk.com
Best Hotel www.best-hotel.com

Treeway

A new entry into the crowded online community market that promises to help you create a quality Web site in minutes

Established communities such as Geocities, Tripod and Homestead already host millions of home pages, but the team at Treeway seems to think there's room for more.

Based in Tel Aviv, it's been working on this home page generator for the past three years. "Most people and small organizations don't have the time, resources or technical know-how to develop their own Web site," explains Treeway's Alon Zakai. "We give you the power and independence to create a free, functional, top quality Web site in very little time and with no knowledge of HTML."

It's easy to be cynical about such brash claims until you try the system. After the obligatory disclaimer, you're guided through building your site. You can choose a theme, add pages (up to a maximum of eight), edit existing pages and adjust the site's layout. Add some contact details, choose a logo, and your site is complete within minutes.

It's an impressive, unique system, and will appeal to anyone who wants to design a site but has no knowledge of HTML. You're limited to the themes and stock images provided, so as with any fully-automated system, the results can be formulaic and repetitive. But the emphasis is firmly on content – Treeway is keen to get people expressing themselves with links and images. "The Internet isn't some exclusive domain that only the privileged can enter," adds Zakai.

But what's the allure for businesses with no need for free home pages? "We have a Partnership Plan which lets companies offer free Web sites using TreeWay technology," says Zakai, "but it's customized, so it appears to be a service provided by the company." If that wasn't tempting enough, a business version of TreeWay's site design package, complete with shopping carts and e-commerce capabilities, is also on the way.

Steve Edwards

www.treeway.com
Design ★★★★☆
Content ★★★☆☆

A SITE FOR SORE EYES

Tripod www.tripod.com
GeoCities www.geocities.com
Homestead www.homestead.com

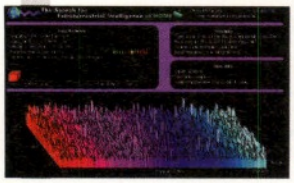
HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

The most impressive aspect of Treeway's design is the site editor, which doesn't require any prior knowledge of HTML whatsoever. Using a server-based application written in C++ and Java, information is submitted in simple forms, integrated into the HTML, then sent back as a finished page. Cleverly, the whole structure is template-based, which lets you construct pages quickly, but it also means the entire site can be given a new look with minimal effort. "These technologies are what makes it so easy to build and change a Web site suitable for your needs, or even your mood," boasts a proud Zakai.

CLICK HERE

Help the hunt for alien lifeforms

If you've ever fancied playing Mulder or Scully, SETI (the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence) is here to help. Visit the Web site and beam down to the SETI@home project to pick up the SETI screensaver. Instead of having a stupid alien flying around in a saucer, the software you download uses your computer's down time to scan a chunk of data to check whether SETI's radio telescopes have found a signal from ET. While it works, the software displays a multicoloured, three-dimensional graph of its work. What more could you want?



www.seti.org

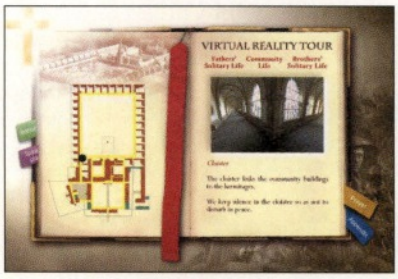
Parkminster Monastery

The only way to visit the largest monastery in the UK

Religion is an integral part of any culture, but you'd be forgiven for wondering why a monastery would need a Web site. Parkminster has been under pressure to open its doors to the public and it can now satisfy popular demand by letting anyone glimpse inside.

Parkminster houses a community of Catholic monks living as hermits – the aim of the site is to impart a little information on the monks' faith, traditions, surroundings and way of life. Information is presented on pages of a book, with bookmarks to navigate between sections. These include an introduction and a brief history, Spirit of Place (how you become a monk), prayers, and an appendix containing links and reference information. It's fascinating and intriguing.

But it's the Virtual Tour that really captures the imagination – you can roam around three areas of the monastery (each vista is accompanied by information on the scene) and click on doors to travel between rooms. It's a simple idea, superbly implemented, and a far better way to exhibit the stunning architecture rather than using 2D photos.



To improve accessibility, the site steers away from technologies which need specific plug-ins, relying heavily on Java applets.

But with the sheer volume of images, access times range from bearable to frustrating. Nick Davies, of site designers Native, remains adamant that rich graphics are essential . "It was my goal to build a site that's digestible, interactive, well presented, and hopefully fun to use."

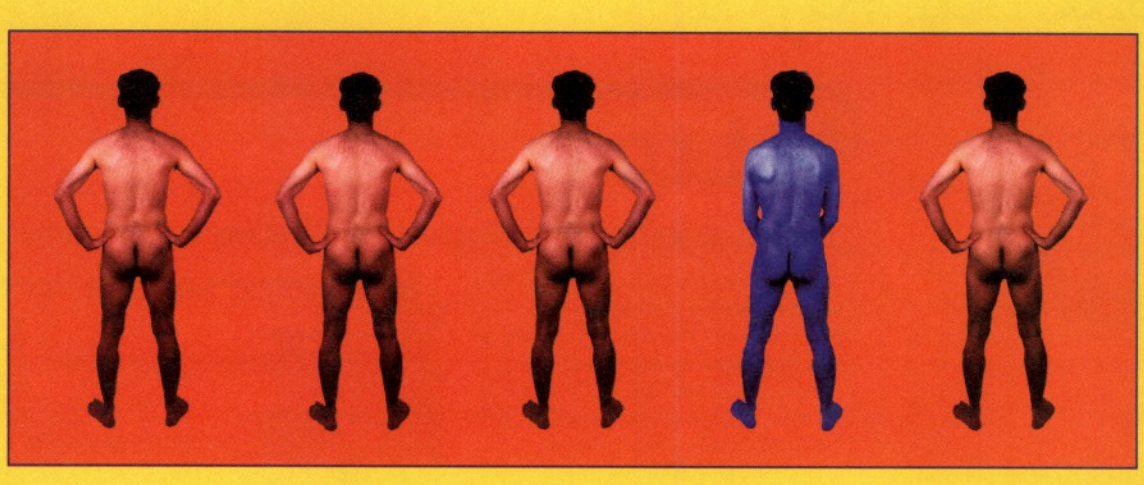
He might have a point. Native's previous site, Farnborough Abbey, has attracted almost two million visitors. The Parkminster site's already a Yell Award nominee, so it looks set to follow suit.

Steve Edwards

www.parkminster.org.uk
Design ★★★★☆
Content ★★★★☆

COME ALL YE FAITHFUL

Farnborough Abbey
www.farnboroughabbey.org
L'Ordre des Chartreux www.chartreux.org
College of Saint Benedict www.osb.org



INTERNET BUSINESS SOLUTIONS, THE BOTTOM LINE

If you want to make an informed decision when it comes to your Internet Business, talk to NetBenefit.

We provide our customers with honest, expert advice for free. And now we'd like to extend this offer to you.

If you're looking to register your domain name, take advantage of e-mail services or are seeking the best web host for your site, read on. We believe there are a few things you should know – so you don't get a bum deal. The things the other advertisements don't reveal.

The naked truth about 'free' domains?
At NetBenefit, one of the longest-established and biggest name registrars, we don't offer free domain registration and as far as we can make out, neither does anyone else, whatever they claim.*

If someone's offering you 'free' registration make sure you read the small print and ask the right questions.

Fact one, whenever you register a UK domain name (even with 'free' registrations), you still have to pay a fee (known as the 'NIC' fee) to the official central registry, Nominet.

If Nominet invoices you directly for the registration, the fee is £80 (for two year's registration), but if your registrar invoices you, the fees only cost your registrar £20. If they're then charging you £80 that means they're making £60 on your 'free' domain. Not a bad margin on something that's meant to be free?

At NetBenefit, we've got a visible pricing policy. That means, when you register a domain name with us you only pay the Nominet fees we get charged. We think this is much fairer to our clients.

Aside from the Nominet fees, 'free' registration is still going to save you money isn't it?

Not necessarily. When you register your domain for 'free', you prevent that name from being registered by someone else, invaluable for protecting your company and brand names on the Internet. This said, when it comes to using the domain as an email and web address, you'll find your registrar will actually insist on you paying them for the pleasure.

So if your 'free' domain registrar is not making any money from registering your domain (except possibly on the registry fee), where do you reckon the costs are going to lie? You guessed it – on e-mail and web forwarding services.

Ask your domain name registrar how much they charge for these services. You'll find that all in all this adds up to not-so-free domain registration.

At the moment, we don't offer free domain registration as we know it isn't possible in the strictest sense of the word. We could offer the 'free' packages other registrars offer, but we think our clients prefer our visible pricing, honesty and advice. Plus, of course, our unrivalled levels of customer service.

Cover your rear end
It's also important when selecting a registrar to consider the value they can add. From easy and efficient registration of .co.uk, .com and international domains to our Global Domain Name and Trademark Protection services, you can rely on us to offer unrivalled advice and execution. Take for instance, our I-Watch service, which automatically keeps an eye on your brand names, checking if anyone else is registering them as Domains in other places.

We'll also help you take full advantage of your domain, with our range of flexible, innovative email and hosting solutions. And as we charge a basic fee for the registration of your name to cover our costs, we won't charge you over the odds.

Web hosting – more than the bare essentials
If you're looking for a host to take care of your website make sure they offer the functionality required to run your site at its best and the reliability to keep your site up and running (independent tests serve as a good indicator – NetBenefit scores consistently well – in fact, our uptime and speed performance are amongst the very best in the business).
Our ethos is to give you the right solution to meet your needs. We're completely flexible, whether you require Unix, Windows NT, FrontPage, Cold Fusion, E-Commerce, Stats, CGI Access Control, Shared, Co-located or Managed servers.

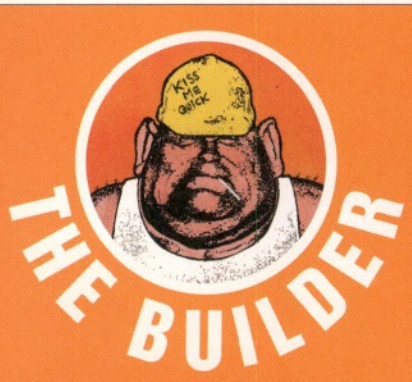
And when it comes to costs, watch out for the hosts who make you commit to 12 month contracts. They may look cheap, but where's the get out clause when they don't perform as you expected? At NetBenefit, you'll find we've no minimum commitment. We're so convinced you'll like our services, we don't need to tie you in like other hosts.

Finally, make sure any Internet partner you choose, offers high standards of service across their business. The ISO 9002 certification serves as a good guide. Something we at NetBenefit are proud to have achieved.

So if you're looking for the best in Internet Business Solutions take the right advice. Turn to a company you can trust.

Call NetBenefit today on 0800 917 0142
or visit our website at **www.netbenefit.com.**

NETBENEFIT
INTERNET BUSINESS SOLUTIONS



HE DONS HIS HARD HAT, SHUNS HIS FRIED BREAKFAST AND GOES BEHIND THE SCENES TO BRING US THE GOSSIP FROM THE WEB DESIGN INDUSTRY

British Narrowcasting Corporation

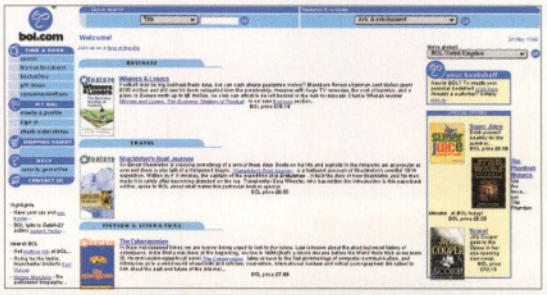
I watch a fair amount of telly when I'm not up ladders and fixing joists. And I don't mind coughing up that ton for my TV licence, even if most of my viewing is courtesy of Unable & Clueless. Anyway, I've hear whisperings that the big wigs at the BBC are concerned about the corporation's Web presence. They don't like the idea that BBC site (as opposed to the independent Beeb at www.beeb.com) can be accessed by foreigners who don't pay the licence fee. One plan to put a spanner in the works is to prevent access from users with a .com domain name. That'd get rid of all those nasty freeloading Yanks. But surely someone should tell 'em about all those UK companies with .com domain names...
www.bbc.co.uk

Take it easy, Easyspace

Erik Young, the 38 year old owner of Easyspace – an online community like GeoCities – seems to be intent on getting into hot water. First, he registered the domain name stgeorgeshill.co.uk (St George's Hill is a dead posh address sometimes called the Beverly Hills of the UK). Cliff Richard lives there and former residents include half the Beatles, Tom Jones and Englebert Humperdink. His idea is to set up an online community including the celebs' phone numbers and plans of their houses. Erik could well fall foul of the law on this one, but if not, his next stunt's a dead cert. The inimitable Mr Young has also registered the domain name lisa-marie-presley.net. This followed complaints from Ms Presley's solicitors about nudity and misuse of her name. Erik responded by email thus: "I have never read such a load of balderdash and codswallop in my life!" Fortunately for Erik, his co-director used to be a lawyer for the late Tiny Rowland. The pair are expecting to hear from Miss Presley's attorney in due course.
www.easyspace.co.uk

bol.com

The latest pretender to Amazon's bookselling crown is launched



BOL.com, Bertelsmann's new e-commerce venture has all the right friends. It's partnered with EMAP Online, The Mirror's IC24, the Sun's Currant.bun and the Sunday Times to sponsor the Hay-on-Wye book festival. Even its adverting strategy is well thought out – it has a strategic relationship with ZDNet UK (www.zdnet.co.uk) to be the preferred book channel on all Ziff-Davis UK Web sites and has invested in an extensive offline ad campaign.

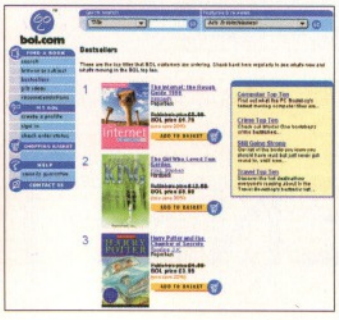
To encourage people to buy books online, sites have to offer some significant savings – BOL offers reductions of up to 40 per cent and a huge catalogue. But its access to over 4.5 million books internationally, including Dutch and French titles (and Spanish and Swiss books coming soon) trounces Amazon.

The test of a new Internet book site is whether people will use it. BOL has neither the whimsical frills of its sister in the US, nor the almost *de rigeur* music link that Waterstone's has to HMV. But by the end of the year, the mammoth resources of Bertlesmann will gear up to offer music and videos, and software will arrive later.

BOL won't comment on its site costs (it was designed in-house) or the turnover it's made, but it's exceeded all of its targets and is a serious player in the British book market. With the benefits of its personalisation service, BOL could well become the book destination for British readers.
Adrian Murdoch

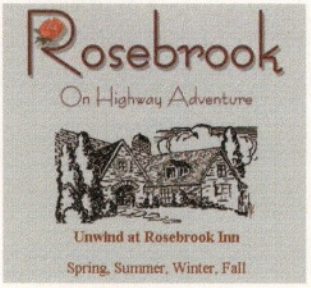
www.uk.bol.com
Design ★★★☆☆
Content ★★★☆☆

FULLY BOOKED
Amazon www.amazon.co.uk
Barnes and Noble
www.barnesandnoble.com
Waterstones
www.waterstones.co.uk



Rosebrook Inn

Ye olde traditional Internet community, fresh from the US



Bonnie Brooks, proprietor of the Rosebrook Inn, reckons that "high-tech communication has replaced the spirit of romance and adventure". The answer? Get back to basics and create an Internet community. So a year ago she launched Rosebrook Inn as "an enchanting, English country style virtual retreat." It's what she likes to call a "comfort zone on the Internet".

What this means in English is anyone's guess. But that's part of the charm of this site littered with helpful Samaritan types pottering around offering advice. Imagine *Ballykissangel* set in Tucson, Arizona and you won't be far off. The inhabitants of this mythical world include a country doctor, a culinary superstar and a family therapist (this is America, remember?).

Its fireside charm is more likely to appeal when the promises of live music, storytelling and live conversation come to fruition.

In the meantime, if you fancy a trip to this enchanting place, you'll be disappointed. Rosebrook Inn doesn't exist in real life. "It's simply a haven for kindred spirits looking to explore and share what's best in our world." So there you go.
Paul Bennett

www.highway-adventure.com
Design ★★☆☆☆
Content ★★★☆☆

ON THE ROAD TO NOWHERE
Sarah's Groovy Ballykissangel Pages
www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/7492
Highways to Adventure www.interlog.com/~rvtours

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

The site has been sustained since its launch in April 1998 by a mixture of volunteers and contra-dealing. It's currently banner-free, but Brooks is considering sponsors and developing an e-commerce arm. But why did Bonnie Brooks choose an English inn to host a concept of community? "I felt an English country inn offered an emotional atmosphere that was warm and comfortable," she says. "We look to you in England as a neighbour, and I'm sure there are opportunities to share and adventures to be had."

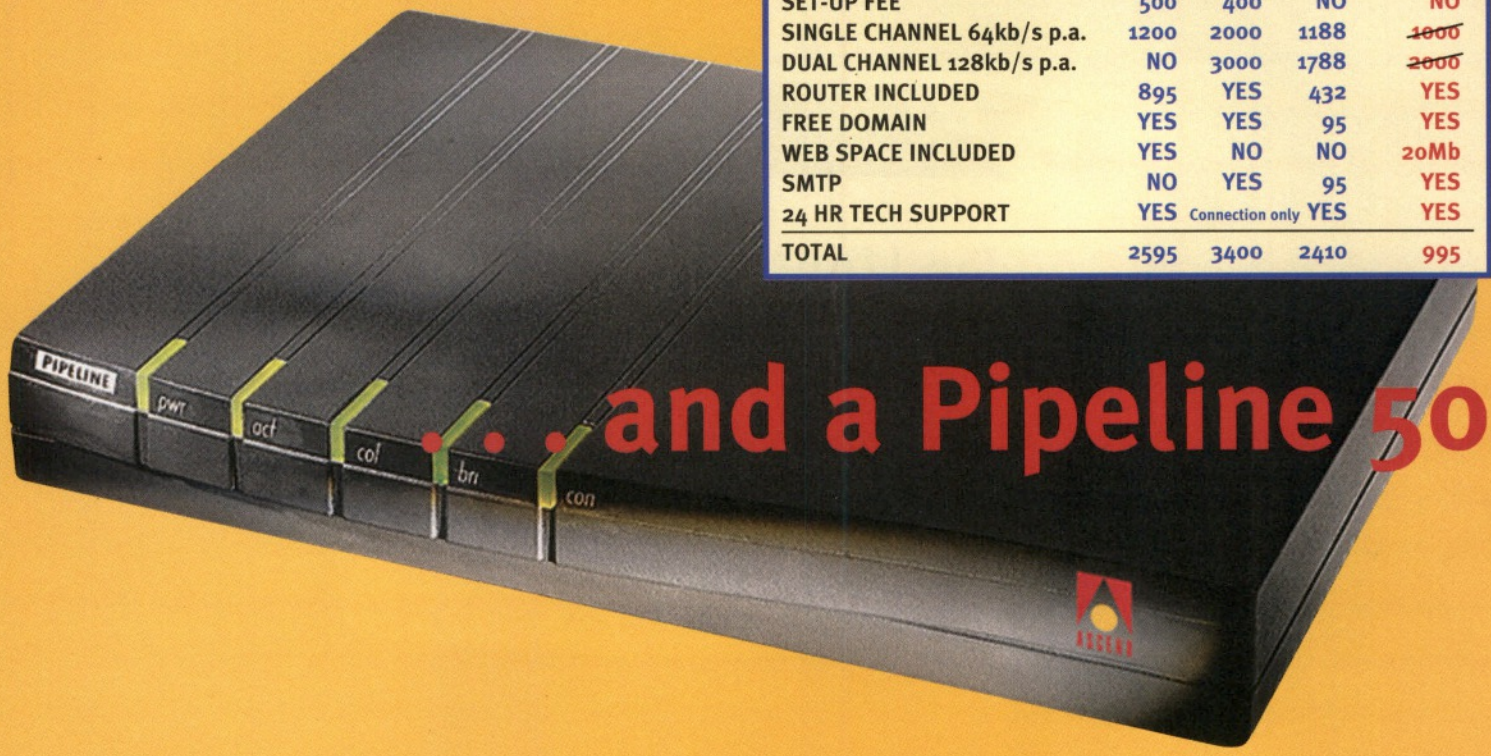
easynet LTD
Internet for Business

LIMITED OFFER

ALL THIS . .

ROUTED INTERNET ISDN COSTS COMPARISON*

	DEMON	PSI	BT	EASYNET
SET-UP FEE	500	400	NO	NO
SINGLE CHANNEL 64kb/s p.a.	1200	2000	1188	~~1000~~
DUAL CHANNEL 128kb/s p.a.	NO	3000	1788	~~2000~~
ROUTER INCLUDED	895	YES	432	YES
FREE DOMAIN	YES	YES	95	YES
WEB SPACE INCLUDED	YES	NO	NO	20Mb
SMTP	NO	YES	95	YES
24 HR TECH SUPPORT	YES	Connection only	YES	YES
TOTAL	2595	3400	2410	995



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www.blackstar.co.uk
the UK's biggest video store

I've been expecting you Mr Bond – for a long time.

As a builder, I know my word has to be my bond. But over at EON, the owners of the James Bond franchise have been taking their time building the new 007.com Web site. If I'd taken that long to do a job, my punters would start charging me rent. Anyway, the designers at Digit are suffering – their only hope is that they can convince EON to approve the site before the release of the next Bond film, *The World is Not Enough*. The only thing I can say is, Mr Bond usually gets there in the nick of time, lads, so keep the British end up!
www.digit1.com

Pressed for a story?

As I was off to work on the Jubilee Line extension the other day, I came across this load of cobblers in the London freebie paper, *Metro*. "Hollywood movie moguls are shuddering at the news that newly-released films are being bootlegged and spread on the Internet." Hmm. The paper went on to explain that "while the data files containing full-length movies are too big for the average home computer user to download, college computers with high speed links and large memory space are able to access the bootlegs in 20 minutes." I've got one word for you, mate – bollards. Your average home computer user has had enough of film downloads, thanks to the two-minute *Star Wars* trailer. And, unless you're using IBM's Deep Blue with a direct connection to the bootlegger's site, by the time you'd downloaded the bloody thing it'd be showing on telly anyway. I dunno, the rubbish these journalists write.
www.metro.thisislondon.co.uk

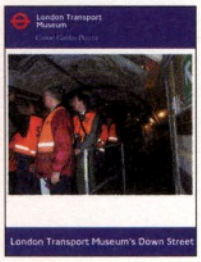
The Builder pulls up his trousers, then picks up the pieces industry cowboys leave behind. Overheard a rumour, and dying to tell someone? Email in strictest confidence to thebuilder@internet.emap.com

London Transport Museum

The Covent Garden transport mecca gets an online presence

Trainspotters, tourists and transport buffs will be enthralled by the Web site of the London Transport Museum. "The plan is to digitise, catalogue and scan every part of the collection and make it available through an advance database called the IMS (Information Management System)," explains press officer Ken Kelling. "People will be able to access the IMS through the Web site – you'll be able to browse any aspect of our collection."

It's certainly impressive, with everything from vehicles and machinery to tickets, posters and artwork. There'll also be virtual presentations and an archive of past exhibitions, plus specially tailored displays based on popular topics.



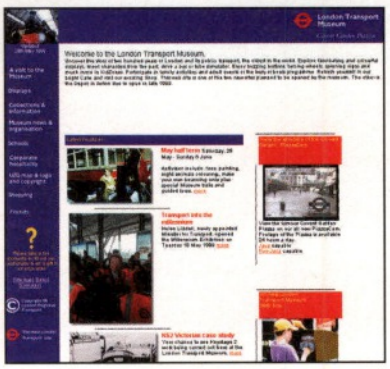
London Transport Museum's Down Street

For those planning a trip to the museum, all the necessary information is included, but if you don't fancy trudging all the way to Covent Garden, there's plenty on the site to enjoy.

Try out the PiazzaCam, which gives you a view of the museum's Covent Garden surroundings, but the pictures can be disappointingly blurry. Still, it's a small gripe in an otherwise absorbing and eye-catching design.

Thankfully, the site is easier to navigate than your average tube station. A simple click and you're on an online tour of disused stations. Another click and you get a preview of the new Jubilee Line extension. You can even check your route to Covent Garden on the all-important tube map. Mind the gap!

Caroline Westbrook



HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

The PiazzaCam has views of the surrounding Covent Garden area updated every 30 seconds. And it's not just based on PC technology. "We use one of the security cameras to record the images straight to a PC, which FTPs the information to the Web server," explains the museum's Gary Jobe. "The program used to FTP the files is a piece of freeware called PJWeb Cam."

www.ltmuseum.co.uk
Design ★★★★☆
Content ★★★★☆

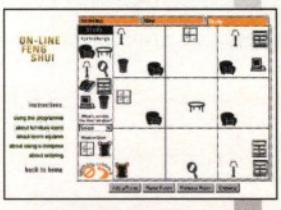
GOING UNDERGROUND

London Transport
www.londontransport.co.uk
Poems on the Underground
www.netpoems.com
The Jubilee Line Extension
www.jle.lul.co.uk

CLICK HERE

Move your sofa and change your life

If you're wondering whether the placement of your sink will make you sick, or if a judiciously placed houseplant could make you a fortune, this is the site for you. For just £11 you can map out the different rooms in your home and Online Feng Shui will tell you if you need to shift it all about to achieve a balanced life. Just arrange your rooms and furniture exactly how they are in real life and hit the button. A must if you're into this sort of thing and a bit of a laugh even if you're not.
www.online-fengshui.com



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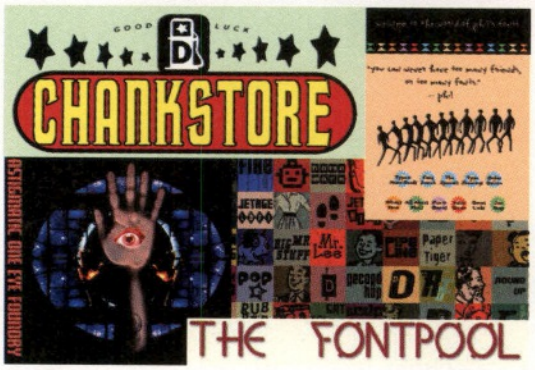


Top 10 PC/Mac font resources

Chankstore www.chank.com
Packed with free fonts, discussion and tips, this award-winning site has inspired a new generation of designers.

Font Source Paradise http://desktoppublishing.com/fonts.html
This comprehensive resource includes links to commercial foundries, font-related zines, shareware and freeware fonts and utilities.

The Fontpool www.fontpool.com
Featuring 1,000 free fonts, a searchable database, content areas and design tutorials, The Fontpool covers just about everything you need.

Dinc Type www.girlswhowearglasses.com
Stop off at DINC Type's wacky site and enjoy its commercial catalogue, featuring fonts such as Winky, Moondog and Swizzle.

Eyewire www.eyewire.com/type
Well organised and stuffed with thousands of eye-catching commercial fonts, Eyewire's site features the entire ITC type library to buy online.

Astigmatic One Eye Foundry www.astigmatic.com
Astigmatic's award-winning site contains hundreds of traditional, bizarre and theme-styled commercial and freeware fonts.

Ray Larabie's Typefaces www.larabiefonts.com
Ray Larabie's slick site contains lots of info and links, as well as his collection of wild-looking freeware fonts.

Phil's Fonts www.philsfonts.com
You can never have too many friends or too many fonts, says Phil. Who are we to disagree?

Linotype www.fonts.de
Linotype's corporate presence on the Net features a library of more than 3,600 original fonts, contacts, special offers and fonts of the week.

FontShop International www.fontfont.de
FontShop's searchable type library currently holds 1,300 fonts, including splashy display fonts, high-quality text faces, symbol sets and Cyrillic typefaces.

NetMaster 99

This utility optimises your Net connection performance by changing hidden settings in Windows 95 and 98. You can tweak a raft of esoteric Registry settings, such as IPMTU, Black Hole Detect and MaxMTU, which can boost the speed at which your modem transfers files. There's a bit of trial and error involved, but the help section will guide you. Netmaster will even restore your system to its original state if things go pear-shaped.

Price *$15 (around £9)*
Platforms *Win 9x*
Download size *932k*
www.magellass.com

Splash! Web Authoring

This nifty WYSIWYG HTML editor lets you design pages without coding. You can use the setup wizard or the comprehensive set of tools to position images and text. Splash! includes a screen resolution preview, a site mapper and a drag-and-draw table creation. You also get Java wizards to enhance your pages and there are new wizards to download every month.
Price *$49.95 (around £30)*
Platforms *Win 9x/NT*
Download size *1.9Mb*
www.gosplash.com

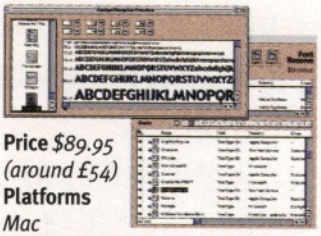
CoffeeCup GIF Animator 2

This powerful utility comes with a variety of tools for creating and editing animated GIFs and AVIs. The

simple interface helps you optimise your animations. There's even a download time estimator. GIF Animator converts JPEGs to GIFs or AVIs into animated GIFs. It will also create the HTML code for you to copy into your pages.
Price *$20 (around £12)*
Platforms *Win9x/NT*
Download size *2.5Mb*
www.coffeecup.com

Font Reserve

Font Reserve is a font management utility that lets you organise and activate fonts on the fly. It supports all formats, including Bitmap, PS Type 1, PS Type 3, TrueType, Multiple Master and GX fonts. You can use Font Reserve as a Quark XTension – it'll automatically activate the fonts required by the document including any embedded graphics. All this and a stylish font browser too.



Price *$89.95 (around £54)*
Platforms *Mac*
Download size *4Mb*
www.fontreserve.com

ColorBox

ColorBox helps you select colours for your Web pages based on the 216 browser-safe colours. Click on a colour square in the floating palette, and ColorBox displays the value in various formats, such as hex, per

Artistscope

Protect the graphics on your site from bandwidth thieves, plagiarists and file grabbing software with Artistscope – a useful tool that encrypts your GIFs and JPEGs so they can only be seen on your own Web site. Once encrypted and uploaded to the server, your graphics cannot be viewed outside Artistscope's Java applet viewer. Safe and sound.
Price *$35 (around £21)*
Platforms *Win 9x/NT*
Download size *2.5Mb*
http://203.147.229.129/artistscopehelp

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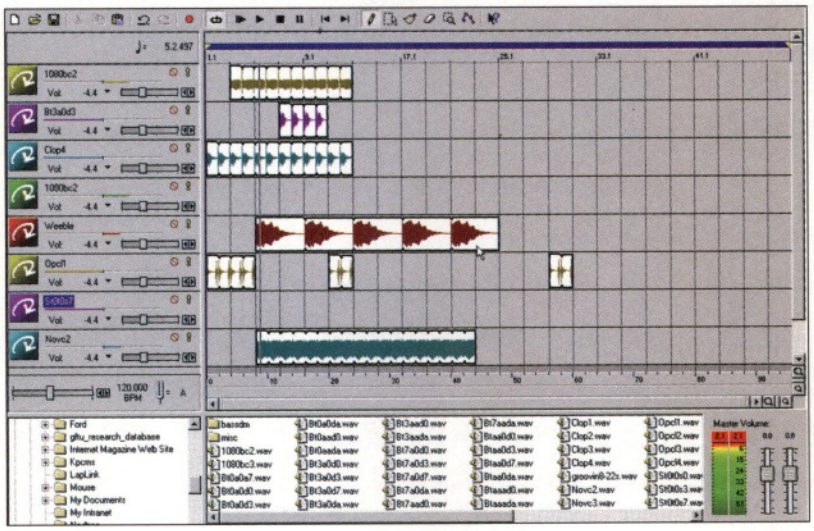
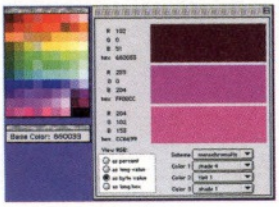


ACID Music

Create streaming audio files in a Windows audio format with this powerful and easy to use sound editor. ACID Music uses short loops that can be strung together to make continuous patterns. You can add more tracks at any point in the timeline, apply effects like reverb and delay, and match loop tempos and pitches. The site includes hundreds of sample loops and plug-ins to download.

Price *$99.95 (around £65)*
Platforms *Win 9x/NT*
Download size *1.3Mb*
www.sonicfoundry.com



cent and byte value. It also generates alternative colour schemes for you.

Price *Free*
Platforms *Mac*
Download size *312k*
www.filez.com

SiteEater

If you're hungry for more content or you want to know how a site ticks, SiteEater is a useful offline browser and file-retrieving tool. Simply type in a URL, and SiteEater will download the entire Web site to your hard disk for browsing offline. You can set how many files you want to download and it'll also filter out specific file types. Grab it.

Price *$49 (around £29)*
Platforms *Win 9x, Mac*
Download size *5.3Mb*
www.sfs-software.com

VSE HTML Turbo

You can make your pages load faster with VSE HTML Turbo, an HTML optimiser that strips surplus characters and spaces from your code, claiming file size savings of up to 50 per cent.

Price *$50 (around £30)*
Platforms *Mac*
Download size *976k*
http://vse-online.com

RealJukebox

An audio player with a raft of integrated utilities. Put a CD into your computer and

RealJukebox identifies the title, artist and tracks. It also converts MP3s from your CDs onto your hard disk.

Price *Free*
Platforms *Win9x/NT*
Download size *5.6Mb*
www.real.com

ON THE CD You'll find all of these hot downloads on our free cover CD

In Tried & Tested

Internet Magazine is committed to bringing you the best and most authoritative reviews in the Internet industry. Every month we test and rate the most important new Internet products. If you're making a buying decision or doing a bit of pre-purchase research, the following pages are not to be missed.

In Tried & Tested you'll find the latest news on newly-announced products, hard-hitting reviews of key product releases and comprehensive Labs tests.

Key reviews for July

This month we've looked at the pros and cons of free Web hosting and tested six of the most popular services. Is it a truly great giveaway or would you be better off paying for your Web space?
See page 82

Apple's new cross-platform software is QuickTime 4, which incorporates the latest audio and video technologies
See page 91

Create broadcast quality animated banner ads for your Web site with Headline Studio
See page 92

Linkbot Pro 4 helps you maintain your site by checking for broken links and common errors
See page 92

You can find out if search engines are effectively finding and ranking your site with TopDog
See page 93

Adobe GoLive 4 is a professional Mac program for developing your Web site
See page 94

Impress your customers with View Card – the business card that houses a mini CD-ROM. It even connects to the Internet so you don't need a browser or an ISP
See page 95

Star Ratings

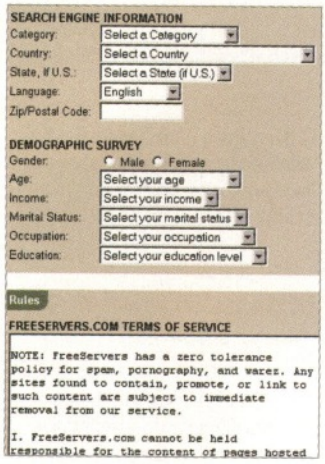
★★★★★	Must buy
★★★★½	Should buy
★★★½	Could buy
★★½	Poor buy
★½	Don't buy

Something for nothing

Free Web hosting

Is free Web hosting a truly great giveaway? Or would you be better off paying for your Web space? Richard Baguley and the labs team check out the pros and cons and test six of the most popular services

The Internet has broken most of the rules of business, including the old adage that you don't get something for nothing. We've all been bombarded with offers of free stuff, including Internet access, content and Web space. But even though you don't pay for these services, there's always a price – and on the Net that means ads on your site and providing personal information.



Many of the Web hosting services (such as FreeServers, above) will ask you for some information about yourself – make sure you're happy with how this information will be used before you supply it

The plethora of companies offering free Web space are no exception, but they do provide an interesting solution to the problem of where to put your site – if you're aware of the limitations.

In 1995, a new company called GeoCities was launched, providing free Web space. If you signed up for this service, you could use the free space for almost anything. In return, you had to carry banner ads on your pages.

Unsurprisingly, this service proved extremely popular, and soon thousands of people were creating Web sites on GeoCities. Then other companies cottoned on that this was a great way to sell adverts. Within a few months, a number of competitors to Geocities emerged – each looking to entice people with free offers and new features, and this market competition hasn't stopped since.

The hosting services are now offering additional features, such as streaming media, which lets you broadcast audio and video from your free Web space. Frankly, there's now relatively little you can do with a commercial Web hosting service that you can't do for free, but there are drawbacks you should be aware of.

Find your ideal host

There are hundreds of companies and sites offering free space, such as Xoom (at **www.xoom.com**), and there's an increasing number of specialist services. MyFamily.com (at **www.myfamily.com**) will give you free space if you want to create a Web site about – yes, you've guessed it – your family. It offers a free calendar service, so you can put important dates for all to see. If you're a chef, you can get free Web space at PastryWiz (at **www.pastrywiz.com**), and comprehensive food-related information for the professional and the consumer. TruePath (at **www.truepath.com**) offers what it describes as "Christ-centred hosting services". Alternatively, there's Homestead (at **www.homestead.com**), whose slogan is "Don't just build a home page... build a homestead!". If you're a philosopher, you can get free space at Esoteric Source Providers (at **www.value.net/~esoteric**). But whatever your interest, you can probably find a free hosting service somewhere on the Web. Finding the ideal home for your pages can be a pain, but there are several good directories of free Web hosting services. You can type in your area of interest and it'll search for your chosen service – try FreeWebspace (at **www.freewebspace.net**) or Serge's Free homepage centre at **www.freehomepage.com/freewp.htm**.

There are plenty of other free Web hosts to consider, including as Xoom.com

The economics of free

The obvious question is, how do these companies make their money? After all, giving away a service that other businesses charge for doesn't seem to be a great route to financial success. The answer is simple – advertising.

All of the services we looked at in the labs tests presented pages with some form of advertising – usually a pop-up advert that appears as pages are loaded. This also explains why none of the hosts we tested had limitations on the number of hits your pages can receive – something most ISPs will impose. But if your pages get lots of hits, a free service can sell lots of advertising on your pages and make lots of money.

You don't have any control over the advertising process, and this can cause problems. You can't determine whether the adverts will be classy or tacky, or whether

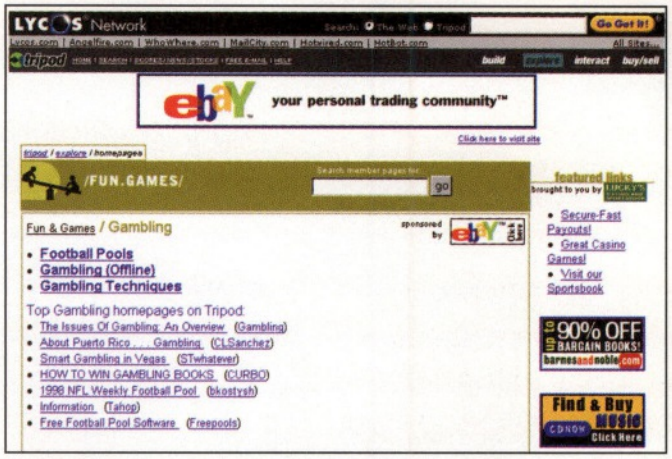
Free Web hosts compared

Service	URL	Typical URL	No of users (approx)	Advert type	Space	Web page templates	Online design tools
FreeServers	www.freeservers.com	http://richardbaguley.freeservers.com	1 million	Banners	12 Mb	✘	✔
Geocities	www.geocities.com	www.geocities.com/SoHo/Bistro/9769	4 million	Pop-up/logo	11Mb	✔	✔
The Globe	www.theglobe.com	http://members.theglobe.com/richardbag	2.3 million	Pop-up	12 Mb	✔	✔
Tripod	www.tripod.co.uk	http://members.tripod.co.uk/baggers	3.5 million	Pop-up	12 Mb	✔	✔
FortuneCity	www.fortunecity.com	www.fortunecity.co.uk/meltingpot/ben/74	1.79 million	Banners	20 Mb	✔	✔
ZyWeb	www.zyweb.com	www.zyweb.com/richardbaguley	Not specified	Banners	5 pages	✔	✔

they'll even directly contradict what your pages are saying. There have been cases of Microsoft hate pages carrying adverts for Microsoft products.

Whatever the economics of these services, they're attracting some big money. Lycos paid nearly $4.2 billion for Tripod, while Yahoo! paid a similar sum (in Yahoo! shares) to buy out GeoCities.

These companies aren't making a huge profit though – like most Internet companies, they're trading at a loss. But they're being bought out for big bucks because they have lots of users, and that's what companies like Yahoo! are after.



All of the services we looked at provide an index of their members' sites, which is an extra way to get people to visit your site

Better than the rest

Most of you will already have some free Web space as part of your ISP subscription. Even the new breed of free ISPs give free Web space to their subscribers, and some ISPs have started to offer unlimited space. So, if you already have space, or you can get it for free from an ISP, why would you want to use free Web hosting services?

The main advantage is that the Web space is yours forever.If you're using your ISP's space and want to move your account or forget to pay the bill, your Web site will quickly disappear. If you move your site, you'll have to let everyone know you've moved and get the search engines to update links to your site.

But with free Web hosting services, you aren't tied to a specific ISP or other service. As long as you don't break the rules (most pertain to pornographic content), the space is yours until the end of the world, and you can keep the same URL whatever happens.

Many of these services form communities where you can group your site with others with similar content.

Free versus paid-for

Many of these services won't let you use certain Web design programs. Some, such as ZyWeb, force you to use their own design tools and make you work online – you can't just create your pages offline and upload them when you're finished. If you're faced with this scenario, make sure you're happy with the tools you're provided with and any limitations this might involve.

You should also remember that the pages you create might not appear on the Web as you think they should. All of these services add adverts to your pages that you can't get rid of (unless you pay a fee). If you don't design your pages with this in mind, you might not get the result you wanted.

Most of these services don't let you sell advertising space on your pages. In our tests, only FreeServers said you could do this, but you'd have to run your ads alongside the ones it puts on pages – so you'd have two banner ads on every page of your site.

Most of the services encourage as many people as possible to come to your site, but some put restrictions on what you can do on your pages. Most forbid adult content, and some (such as ZyWeb) don't let you use their free services for business purposes. Instead, ZyWeb has a service for small businesses that's available for only £50 a year – so make sure you read the rules and sign up for the right service before you put your site up and start telling people where to go.

Free Web hosting services are a good deal as long as you know what you're getting. They aren't going to replace commercial Web hosting, because they aren't as flexible as the services you can get from specialist companies.

For a start, you don't get technical support – some services offer online guides to Web design, but none of them provide the level of support you'd expect from a dedicated hosting company or an ISP. But these services are already providing good homes for thousands of sites, and if all you want is a home for your few simple pages, they're ideal.

Conclusions

It's difficult to choose one Web host over another because they've all got different approaches to the way they let their members use the space. But it's possible to make some recommendations for different types of users – if all you want is lots of Web space without any of the trimmings and a simple URL, FreeServers is the best option.

If you're likely to want extra trimmings, such as streaming video, GeoCities is a good service with plenty of help, but your URL will be rather long and clumsy. ZyWeb has a good service for beginners, because you don't have to learn HTML, but you might be irritated by its limitations.

How the free Web hosts perform

There's no point in having the best free Web host on the planet, offering you loads of features and tons of Web space if no one can look at your pages, so we've also tested their performance. These tests were carried out by Keynote systems (at **www.keynote .com**), a company that provides performance testing services to Web sites and ISPs throughout the world. It's tested the speed (in kilobytes per second) at which Web pages can be downloaded from two locations – London and San Francisco. All six of the services were tested during May on how fast sites hosted by them would download from the UK and the US.

FreeServers (which is located in the US) comes out badly in the UK figure, but well in the US. This situation is reversed for ZyWeb, which perform much better in the UK than the US, although their figures are slower than the other providers. Geocities scored extremely well in the US figures, but this could be partly explained by the fact that they are located in Silicon Valley, pretty close to the Keynote testing machines. However, all of the providers achieved speeds that we would count as acceptable – even the slowest (ZyWeb) wasn't really a problem, and this could be excused by the fact that it's still a pretty new service.

* with existing domain names. Registration fees (£42) apply for new names

Design offline	Commercial use	Domain name	Free email type	No of email accounts	Other services	Rating
✔	✔	✔*	POP3	Unlimited	Counter, guestbook, community area	★★★★
✔	✘	✘	POP3/Forwarding	1	Chat, message boards, guestbook, streaming media	★★★★
✔	✔	✘	Web	1	Classifieds, calendar, address book, auctions	★★★★
✔	✔	✔£15	✘	Unlimited	Chat	★★★★
✔	✔	✘	Web	1	Chat, CGI scripts	★★★
✘	✘	✘	✘	None	Commercial service available	★★★

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VIEWCAM

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MINIDISC SYSTEM

SHARP digital

LYCOS

Tripod

Tripod's pop-up ad windows can be slightly irritating, but they're easily closed

Simple addresses, a good online page editor and no ads on your pages

Tripod is one of the veterans of the free Web space market. The US company was set up in 1996, but its UK branch didn't arrive until last year. Tripod also has branches in Italy, Germany, France and the Netherlands, making it unique among the systems we've tested – the others rely on one central location to serve the world. The company was bought by Lycos earlier this year, and now forms part of the Lycos network.

You have to provide some basic demographic information during the registration process. Tripod uses this information to tailor advertising, but claims it'll never sell your details, so you shouldn't end up on a mailing list.

Sites are easy to find on Tripod – the URL is something like **http://members.tripod.co.uk/baggers.** While this is a nice, memorable URL, it means many of the good names have already been taken, but with a bit of imagination you should find one that works. If not, **http://members.tripod.co.uk/smith** is still available. The system is also case-sensitive, so try different variations if your first choice isn't available.

Member pages aren't divided up into sections like GeoCities, but Tripod has a system called Pods, which groups like-minded sites. Each pod includes an online chat service, so you can talk to other people about the subject of your choice.

You also get a rather good online page editor called HomePage Studio, which can be run at different levels. If you're a beginner, there's a step by step approach, which takes you through the process of creating a page by personalising the different elements (such as the title and images) without having to write any HTML. If you've got more advanced skills, the program lets you edit the HTML online, or you can create pages on your PC and upload them using your own choice of program.

Tripod's advertising is a standard pop-up window that appears whenever a page is opened. As usual, this can be closed or put behind the main page, but it reappears whenever you click on a link within Tripod. You won't get an ad on every page, but they appear on most.

There's no other advertising though, so your pages will appear as they've been designed. The only annoying thing is that every time you open a new page, it opens a new pop-up window, so in a short space of time you can have a lot of windows open – which takes up memory. Tripod doesn't supply email accounts, but it has a link to the Lycos email service.

Tripod lets you use your space for commercial use. It doesn't have any systems for selling goods straight off the page, but you can use your space to promote your goods or services – although you can't carry ads on your pages.

★★★★☆

Tripod
Typical URL http://members.tripod.co.uk/baggers
Pros *Short and easy to remember URL, good service, no adverts on your pages*
Cons *Few extra features*
Contact *Lycos*
www.tripod.co.uk

YAHOO!

GeoCities

The original free hosting service offers plenty of features to keep you loyal

GeoCities was the first free hosting service. Launched in 1995, it's been enhancing its service ever since. It's one of the most feature-laden of the services we looked at in these labs tests, and includes an online editing system, chat, message boards and even streaming media.

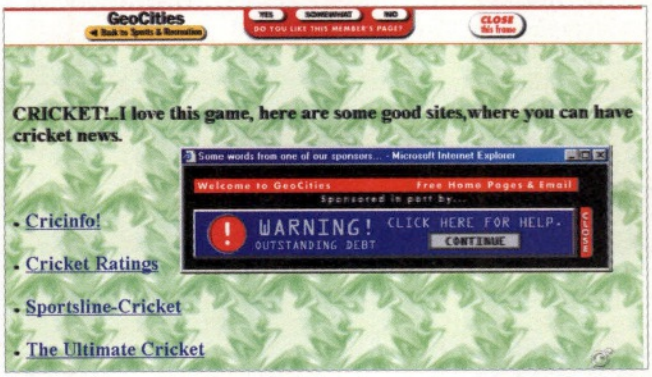
GeoCities is divided into neighbourhoods, which are based on a specific theme or subject. The SoHo neighbourhood, for instance, has sites about art and literature. The neighbourhoods are subdivided into separate areas – SoHo is divided up into the Bistro, Studio and other areas. The idea is that all of the sites in a specific area can be found in one neighbourhood, so you'll find it easier to browse sites on a particular topic. This is a nice idea, but it's also a bit of a pain if you can't find an obvious area that interests you. But with the number and variety of sites on GeoCities, this seems unlikely.

This system has some long URLs – **www.GeoCities.com/SoHo/Bistro/9769**, for example – which hardly roll off the tongue. There's also a small floating GeoCities logo that appears at the bottom right hand corner of every page that's hosted on the service. GeoCities refers to it as a watermark – if you click on it you can browse other sites in the same neighbourhood. It's always there, but it's not hugely irritating and it's one of the prices you pay for using this sort of service.

GeoCities uses pop-up windows which contain a standard banner advert. This window is independent of the main one – it can be moved around or even closed, but a new one pops up every time you jump to a new page.

There's a wide selection of adverts on the system, so there's no way to tell what's going to appear on your pages. A small frame also appears at the top of the screen asking you to vote for your favourite sites, but it's easy enough to close it. You can't use GeoCities for commercial purposes, but it has an e-commerce service – GeoShops, which costs $24.95 (around £15) a month.

Also included with the system is a good online Web page editing system called GeoBuilder, and an efficient system for managing the files on your site (File Manager). You'll also get plenty of free information on how to put features such as hit counters on your pages.



The advertising on GeoCities can be a bit much – you get a pop-up banner, a corner logo and a ratings menu at the top of the page

One of GeoCities' more recent additions to the service is streaming media. This means you can broadcast live audio or video from your site using Real's G2 system. But I wouldn't dust off your entire video collection just yet – GeoCities will charge you a $4.95 (around £3) setup fee and it's limited to 5Mb of streaming media a month (around 16 minutes of quality audio).

★★★★☆

GeoCities
Typical URL www.GeoCities.com/SoHo/Bistro/9769
Pros *Plenty of features and support*
Cons *Long URLs, neighbourhoods can be overcrowded*
Contact *Yahoo!*
www.GeoCities.com

FORTUNECITY

FortuneCity

A good service, but lacking in features – and the ads could mess up your pages

FortuneCity is a UK service which has been successfully floated on the stock market. Its UK site came first, with the international site (at **www.fortunecity.com**) coming later – it's nice to see things working this way round for a change. Its name might give the impression that it's a business host, but FortuneCity will host pages on any subject.

The pages are divided into districts on general subjects, such as sport or computers, and each of these districts is divided into streets – each street has 100 residents. This leads to some long URLs (such as **www.fortunecity.co.uk/meltingpot/ben/74**), but it's a nice way to organise all the sites.

You can browse the pages by type, and all the Web sites in a specific street are presented as a long terrace in one screen. Some areas seem rather sparsely populated, though, many of them having only a handful of occupants. Some areas even have links in the what's happening section or pages that have been removed, which is poor. You can use your Web space for commercial purposes as long as the pages are located in the business district.

As with many of the other services we looked at in this labs test, you can either create pages online through the homebuilder template system, or offline in an HTML editor. There's a chat service on offer, as well as discussion pages (or debates as FortuneCity calls them) where you can discuss issues of the day.

Email is provided, but you can only access it through the Web site – you can't have email forwarded to another address in the way other services provide for. But this isn't a great problem – you can put any email address you want (including one from the other free email services) into your site as your contact address.

FortuneCity automatically places banner ads at the top of your pages. Most free hosting companies use pop-up windows for their ads, but FortuneCity's appear directly on your pages.

The terms and conditions give you the option to move the banners if they don't fit in with your design, but you're not allowed to remove them. You don't have to worry about creating the code for the banner ads though – FortuneCity's BannerBot automatically adds the code into your pages once a week. Strangely enough, when we looked for some examples, hardly any of the sites had banners on the pages, so perhaps BannerBot isn't quite up to speed yet.

FortuneCity lets you run your own adverts on your, as long as you don't interfere with the ubiquitous FortuneCity banner ads

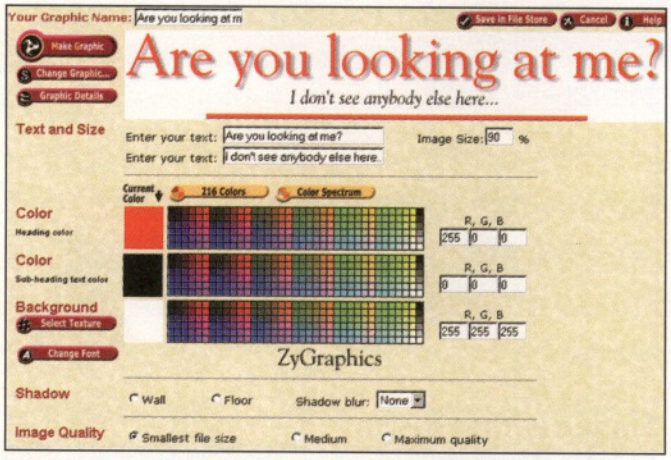
FortuneCity is a good service, but it's missing some of the more powerful features that the other services offer. There's no streaming media, only a limited selection of CGI scripts and lots of unfilled spaces in the neighbourhood.

★★★☆☆

FortuneCity
Typical URL www.fortunecity.co.uk/meltingpot/ben/74
Pros *Well organised, easy to use Web page design system*
Cons *Long URLs, some areas are sparsely populated*
Contact *FortuneCity*
Phone *(0171) 700 1617*
www.fortunecity.co.uk

ZY.COM

ZyWeb



ZyWeb is unusual in that the entire site is designed online – you can't just design your own pages and upload them when you're ready

Design and build your site online – it doesn't get much easier than this

ZyWeb is another UK-based service, run by Zy.com, which produces the graphics software ZyGraphics. The service is rather different to the others in the labs test because you do everything online.

Instead of creating pages in a HTML editor, it's all done through ZyWeb's site. You start by choosing a basic page from 20 examples provided for you by ZyWeb. This sets the tone of the whole process – you select the style of the item you want to use on the page, and the system generates it for you, including headers, borders and backdrops. As it's all done through the Web page, you don't have to download or run any software, apart from your normal Web browser.

There's a good selection of templates and more than 100 fonts to choose from. You can create some nice looking pages by going through the process, but also some completely hideous ones – it depends on your design talents.

Unfortunately, the process can be rather cumbersome. If you want to change the colour of a header, for instance, you click on your choice of colour and the system makes the change. But it then has to reload the entire page, which can take some time if you're on a slow connection.

There are some other quirks – if you want to create a link to a page outside ZyWeb, you have to manually put the HTML into the page to create the link.

There are plenty of limitations to the system – your site can only have five pages, for instance. These pages can be as large as you like, but if you make them too big they'll take a long time to download, so it's not a good idea.

The other major limitation is that you can only use five images on your site – you can generate as many images on the system as you want, but you can only put five of them on your pages. ZyWeb's banner ads are inserted at the bottom of the page. As usual, you can't remove the ads unless you're willing to pay for the privilege.

The service was clearly designed as a taster for the more powerful commercial systems that Zy.com offers, including those aimed at commercial customers, such as ZyWeb Business. It's also looking to sell the service to other ISPs.

ZyWeb might be a limited service, but if you just want a simple way to create a few pages, it's an easy option that doesn't entail having to learn any HTML.

★★★☆☆

ZyWeb
Typical URL www.zyworld.com/richardbaguley
Pros *A simple way to create your pages and have them hosted*
Cons *The online editing system is rather limiting and you could find it too basic or formulaic*
Contact *Zy.com*
Phone *(01442) 350 350*
www.zy.com

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_____

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Fax: _____

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DIRECT CONNECT

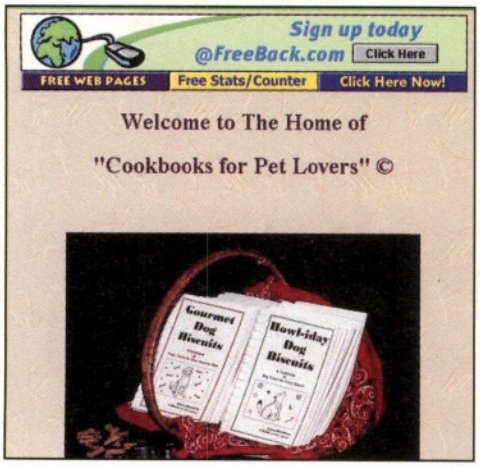
FreeServers

A basic but highly effective service with more space than you could ever want

FreeServers different approach to accessing your pages makes for simpler URLs – **http://richardbaguley.freeservers.com** would be typical. It's not quite as good as getting your own domain name, but it's a lot better than many of the URLs you'd get from other services.

If you already own a domain name, FreeServers will transfer it to your FreeServers site for free – so if a browser types in **www.yourname.com**, they're automatically taken to your FreeServers site. New domains can also be registered, but they'll cost you about $70 (around £42) for a .com domain because of the fees charged by Network Solutions.

FreeServers provides an online Web page editing system called Easy Site Builder, but it's pretty basic – this service is aimed at people who want to do their own editing in an HTML program.



FreeServers' advertising appears as banner ads on your pages – you can run your own banners as well if you want to

You can upload your pages onto your free Web space either by using FTP or FreeServers' built-in Web Manager system. There's also a nice feature that'll copy an existing Web site – just give it a URL and it'll automatically copy the entire site into your new Web space.

FreeServers uses banner ads for advertising, which are automatically placed on your pages by the Web server. Unusually, FreeServers also lets you run your own advertising (as long as it doesn't interfere with what it's already put on your site). It offers a free banner ad service for $5.95 (around £4) a month.

You can also run banner ads from another service, such as LinkExchange. But I don't think many people will want to do this – having two banner ads on a page would increase the download times and annoy your visitors.

There are a few extra features, such as a hit counter, which can be put onto a page by inserting the HTML tag <COUNTER>, a guestbook service, and a step by step guide to creating forms that'll let your visitors email you. This is pretty comprehensive, and there's a good selection of links to resources on Web design and places to find new backgrounds and borders.

There's a community section which links like-minded sites together, but this is really just a peripheral service. At the core, FreeServers is a basic, but highly effective free hosting service.

FreeServers gives you more Web space than the other hosts – an impressive 20Mb. Whether this is really important depends on the size of your site – but you're unlikely to need more space than this to house your existing site.

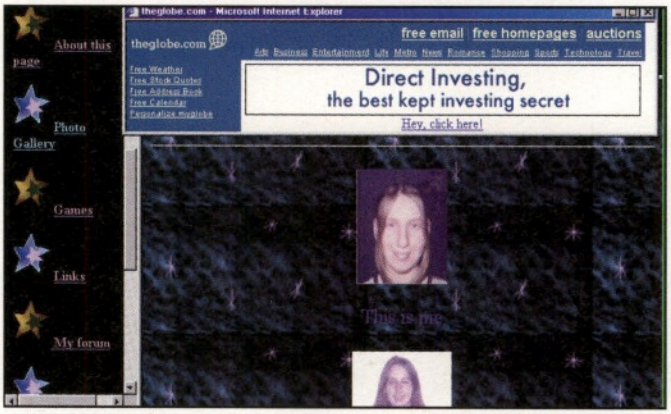
Web pages aren't usually very large, so unless you've got hundreds of them, you're unlikely to be able to fill 12Mb, let alone the 20Mb on offer here. Still, it's nice to have the room for expansion in case you need it in the future.

★★★★☆

FreeServers.com
Typical URL http://richardbaguley.freeservers.com
Pros *Simple, strong service*
Cons *No online editing system and few extra features*
Contact *Direct Connect*
Phone *(001801) 371 6962*
www.freeservers.com

THE GLOBE

Theglobe.com



The Globe's pop-up ad window is a bit larger than some, but the service has lots of good points to make up for any irritations

A strong, community based service with plenty of useful design features

Theglobe.com is another veteran of the Internet scene – it was founded in 1994 with $1,500 that the two founders borrowed from friends and family. The company went public in 1999 and is now worth around $600 million dollars, which shows you what kind of money these services are attracting.

Theglobe.com's approach is to go for the community idea with attitude. When you become a member, you get 12Mb of Web space and a free email account, plus a slew of other features, such as forums, news feeds and chat. There's a range of features for designing pages.

If you're a beginner, there's a template-based system, called Homebuilder, which comes with a good selection of templates, such as Photo Album, Résumé and Fan site. If you've got more advanced skills, you can build your pages on your own PC and upload them to your Web space.

Theglobe.com is notable for the extras it provides for its members. As well as the usual email and design tools, there are lots of other features that can be either integrated into pages or run separately, such as calendars, address books, weather predictions and even stock quotes (although it doesn't list UK stocks at present).

Unfortunately, it lacks the more sophisticated HTML tools of some other services in this labs test – there's nothing like the streaming media features of GeoCities, for instance.

Advertising on Theglobe.com is through the usual pop-up advert. This pop-up window is a bit larger than on the other sites – it also contains links to other parts of the Globe site, such as its free email and auctions services. This makes it intrusive, but as with all the pop-up ads, you can either close it or put the window behind your main one.

Once you've created your site, Theglobe.com comes into its own. Member pages are linked into other sections of the site, so looking at a news story on the Kosovo crisis, for instance, could lead you into another member's pages about the subject.

Theglobe.com is divided into themes (such as business, arts and romance). There's also a large selection of forums where members can discuss a huge range of topics, and once again, there are links from here into their pages.

Theglobe.com probably isn't the place to go if you just want some space for a few pages, but it's worth looking at if you want to build pages that are part of a community. There's also a UK site (at **www.theglobe.co.uk**), but it's just a mirror of the main site.

★★★★☆

Theglobe.com
Typical URL http://members.theglobe.com/richardbag
Pros *Good community and features*
Cons *Interface can be clumsy, lacks the HTML features of other hosts*
Contact *The Globe*
Phone *(001212) 886 0803*
www.theglobe.com

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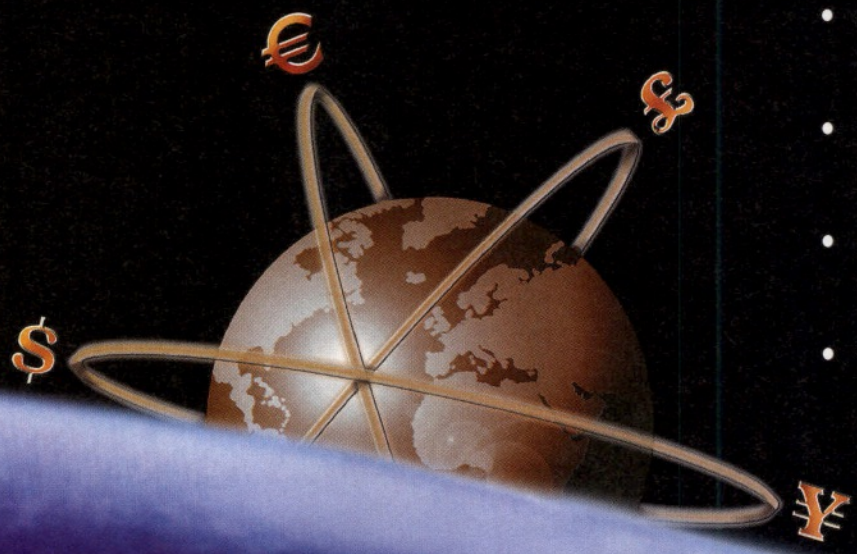

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European Headquarters
WorldPay plc, Orwell House, Cowley Road, Cambridge CB4 4WY U.K.

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Top products for July

There's a host of products to help you out this month – create animated banner ads, check for broken links and errors, search the search engines and get yourself a CD-ROM business card

MULTIMEDIA SOFTWARE

QuickTime 4

The latest version of Apple's software incorporates the latest technologies

In the rush towards a bright new multimedia future, there's a growing demand for streaming audio and video through networks and Internet connections.

We can't watch full screen, full motion video yet, but streaming technologies and compression techniques are bringing this closer, with major players such as Real's G2, Microsoft's Media Technology and Apple's QuickTime 4 leading the charge.

QuickTime started life on the Mac in a straightforward video playback format, but it's turned into a cross-platform viewer for a huge range of media, providing a browser plug-in, a standalone player and a basic authoring environment.

QuickTime 3 calculated the speed in which a video file was downloading and started playing after a short time to give the impression of live streaming. The technology was impressive, but it was no match for Real G2, with its true streaming abilities, widely available free players and authoring software. These benefits come at a price to developers though – Real demands licensing fees for its proprietary server software.

QuickTime 4 (now in public beta) sees Apple going head to head with Real, offering true streaming of live and stored audio and video, using non-proprietary industry-standard Real-Time Transfer Protocol and Real-Time Streaming Protocol for streaming over the Internet.

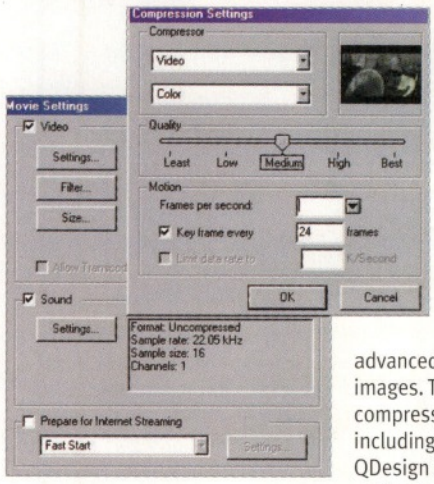
ON THE CD **You have to install QuickTime 4 direct from the Apple site, but you'll find a copy of QuickTime 3 on our free cover CD**

With this release, Apple has decided to license its open Internet Streaming Server software under an Open Source model, which – in English – means ISPs and network managers can stream content without having to pay 'per stream'. This might prove to be Apple's key weapon in its armoury.

QuickTime streaming works by adding an information track (or hint) to digital content so the QuickTime streaming server can break it down into small packets of information for transmission over the Web. Any media format with a hint track can be transmitted, and any application that supports QuickTime can have streamed material embedded within it – including MS PowerPoint and MS Word.

Apple is releasing several versions of QuickTime – a basic player, viewer and plug-in (2Mb), a feature-loaded 3Mb download, and an authoring package which weighs in at a heftier 6.5Mb. But Apple's misnamed 'intelligent installer' is seriously flawed.

You have to download the QuickTime executable from the Apple site and double-click to start the installation – this forces you back to the site, where you choose the components you want to install, then gaze at a blue screen while your files crawl down the line.



Apple's non-standard interface is attractive, but it's a pain to use. The Pro version offers a powerful set of compression options

Apple makes you go through the same process for every computer on your system. Network managers won't be impressed – why can't you download what you want in one go?

QuickTime installs plug-ins for your browsers and a viewer for a wide range of still image formats (including TIFF, JPEG, Photoshop, TARGA, BMP, FlashPix and PNG), as well as QuickTime for Java and the QuickTime Player for audio and visual content.

In the middle of the oversized interface is a large play button – you can activate ancillary controls by clicking on two smaller buttons. These slide down from the player and offer a set of tone, balance, rewind and fast forward controls, but, annoyingly, you can't change your settings for future sessions.

An odd-looking drawer stores links to your favourite files. It might be funky to look at, but it's not as simple as it should be and can be clunky on slow machines.

Aesthetics aside, the QuickTime Player supports a multitude of video, audio and animation formats, including AVI, Flash, WAV, MIDI, GIF and, notably, MP3. The window can be resized during playback, but compression marks quickly become noticeable at larger screen sizes.

For developers, Apple has a professional version for £29.95. This includes multi-format editing, so you can splice video and audio content from anywhere – even when streaming – along with a host of video filters.

QuickTime Pro also includes tools to prepare QuickTime movies for Internet streaming, with advanced export capabilities for still images. There's a host of compression technologies on tap, including MP3, Sorenson Video, QDesign Music, H.261, GSM and DVI – this should let the content providers optimise playback for dial-up Internet access, CD-ROMs and DVD-ROMs.

Testing the speed of the streamed content proved rather difficult because the handful of QuickTime 4 sites on the Web were all busy, so it's a little too early to judge its performance.

Viewing older material wasn't as good as I'd hoped. Apple claims you can experience high-quality playback, even with 28.8Kbps modems. I couldn't detect any visual improvement over Real G2, although the audio sounded marginally better. Support for MP3 was disappointing – the audio jumped all over the place, there's no playlist (the links drawer soon becomes a confusing mess of generic audio icons for each track) and, surprisingly, QuickTime won't let you export CD audio as MP3.

As it is, QuickTime 4 has too many flaws to be recommended over Real G2, and you might want to wait for the full release.

Mike Slocombe

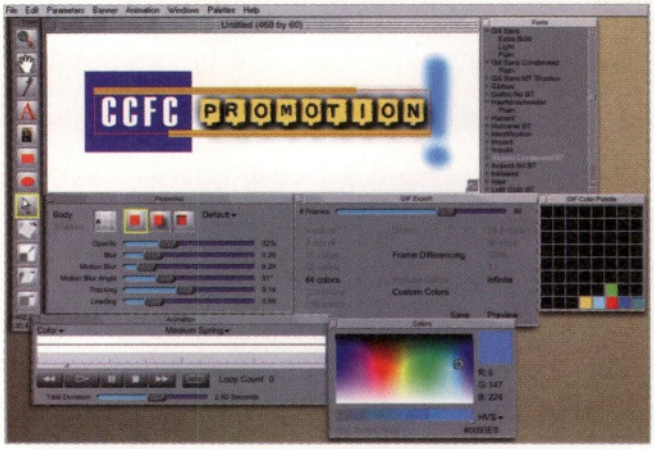
★★★☆☆

Quicktime 4

Price *Free, Pro version £29.95*
Pros *Streaming, no server tax*
Cons *Annoying installer, clunky interface*
Contact *Apple*
Phone *(0990) 127 753*
www.apple.com/quicktime

BANNER AD CREATOR

Headline Studio



Headline Studio's interface might be attractive, but it's ultimately frustrating

Create broadcast quality animated banner ads for your Web site

Headline Studio has been designed to create broadcast-quality animated Web banners. It comes with a well written colour manual and features a quirky, non-standard interface that looks like it's come straight from the Mac.

Headline Studio uses its own proprietary format to create and save animated files, which you can convert to animated GIFs. This lets you experiment with your ideas without affecting image quality.

There's not much scope for creating the elements of your animation – the program offers a paltry collection of tools – but you can import graphics in JPEG, TIFF and transparent GIF formats.

Projects are constructed around a single timeline onto which individual elements are placed. You create animations by advancing the timeline, changing the properties of the element and letting Headline Studio animate the movement in between (tweening).

The clever stuff starts when you start altering transitions between keypoints and adding animation effects. You can add cartoon characteristics to your text and make graphics bounce all over the page. You can also make elements accelerate and grind to a halt, or have individual letters chasing each other across a banner.

As animations become more complex, the single timeline concept becomes unbearably fiddly – you have to be incredibly patient to synchronise the multiple elements on one timeline.

You can only specify the amount of frames for your animation when you save your pages for the Web. In theory, this lets you trade off image size against animation smoothness, but the program's sleek transition effects demand a high frame rate, which leads to unacceptable file sizes, or clunky movement.

You can explore the GIF export options in a separate window, where changes in colour palettes, colour depth, frame rates and dithering can be instantly previewed. A throughput preview feature lets you view your animation as it might arrive on a selection of connection speeds, while the title bar usefully displays the file size – which can get pretty mighty with lots of transitions and fades.

Headline Studio can produce sophisticated animations, but unless you're prepared to invest time in learning storyboards and proper animation effects, you might be tempted to go for the familiar whizzing text and spinning logos – all of which can be achieved in less complicated programs.

Mike Slocombe

★★★☆☆

Headline Studio

Price *£179*
Pros *Great idea, powerful animation*
Cons *Bodged interface, limited graphic tools*
Contact *MetaCreations*
Phone *(0181) 956 2500*
www.metacreations.com

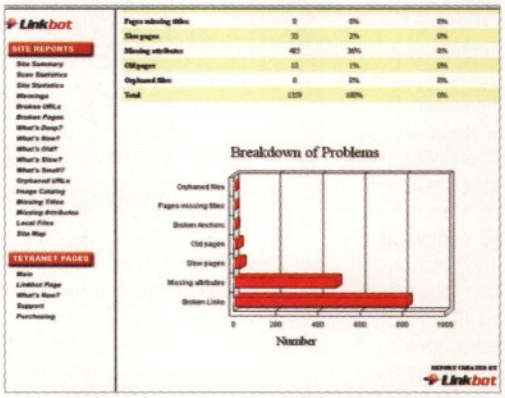
LINK CHECKING SOFTWARE

Linkbot Pro 4

Maintain your pages by checking for broken links and common errors

Blunders like broken pages with duff links, dodgy HTML and 404 errors can appear with alarming regularity on Web sites. Things can get worse in team environments when individuals decide to get 'creative' with your precious code.

For companies keen to promote a professional image online, these kind of errors can prove potentially disastrous – if you can't keep your own site in order, who's going to trust you with their money?



Linkbot produces a detailed analysis of your site's errors

There are plenty of HTML validating and link checking options in most HTML packages, but these tend to be rather rudimentary and time consuming – especially when you're dealing with larger and more complex sites.

Linkbot has positioned itself as the dedicated all-in-one solution to these problems, claiming to be the most advanced and comprehensive Web testing solution on the market. The program automatically scans Web sites for more than 50 potential problems and generates a detailed error report.

This latest version boasts several new features – full HTML 4 support, a unique ability to find broken links in JavaScript, a host of interface enhancements and improved overall performance – the program can verify up to 30,000 links in 30 minutes.

Linkbot can check local and remote sites, and will report broken links, orphan files and incorrectly structured tags, as well as missing titles, images and metatags. It'll even show you files that are too many clicks from your home page.

Reports are automatically generated as HTML files, with graphic charts displaying detailed information on all aspects of your site. The files can be divided by author for use in Web development teams. You can customise these reports and they can be indexed against previous logs to monitor long-term trends across your site.

A site structure tree lets you view complex sites by criteria that you can define yourself, such as Web, FTP and multimedia links. You can create an image library for the entire site, along with an alphabetical HTML index. There's also an option to view parent and child links from any specified file.

This new version offers full integration with Microsoft FrontPage and Homesite. You can run it as an NT service and schedule comprehensive site checks while you're down the pub – it'll produce a detailed analysis for your perusal over morning coffee. You can even set it to 24-hour monitoring of your site – it'll automatically contact you (via email or pager) if errors are found.

All this combines to form a formidable and highly scaleable tool for Web designers and site administrators. Small Web companies might baulk at the price, but it could prove a worthwhile investment. Look out for the free personal version, Linkbot Express, on Tetranet's Web site.

Mike Slocombe

★★★★☆

LinkBot Pro 4

Price *£295 for a single user*
Pros *Powerful and comprehensive site checking tools, impressive speed*
Cons *Hefty price*
Contact *Tetranet*
Phone *(001613) 599 388*
www.tetranetsoftware.com

INTERNET MARKETING TOOL

TopDog

Find out if the top search engines are effectively finding and ranking your site

TopDog is an essential Windows-based marketing tool if you own a Web site and you want to analyse its rank and position on popular search engines.

You can download TopDog4 as a free evaluation. The only difference between this and the complete version is the number of search engines the program can access. The restricted package lets you test any URL in five top search engines - Yahoo!, Alta Vista, Excite, Infoseek and Quest Finder.

Downloading is easy – TopDog will run on most PCs and can operate on Windows 9x and NT systems, including networks, without causing conflicts with firewall procedures.

The program is self-explanatory, even without its concise and jargon-free instructions. The useful Help window remains at the front of your screen by default.

To run a test, just input a URL and meta tag keywords, and TopDog will do the rest. Searching is fast enough, considering the amount of trawling that's required.

TopDog Summary Report

Project: **nhm**
Run date: **Wednesday, May 12, 1999 06:52:11**
Performed for: **www.nhm.ac.uk**
Keywords: **natural history museum**

Congratulations! Your site was listed:

- by 2 of 5 search engines.
- Once among the top thirty positions.

Your TopDog average scores are:

- **73** out of 100 among search engines that list your site
- **29** out of 100 for all search engines.

Search Engine	Rank	Page	Position	Status
Alta Vista	21 (-21)	3	1	Listed (3 pages, 30 results received)
Excite	34 (-34)	3	9	Listed (3 pages, 35 results received)
InfoSeek	0	0	0	Not listed (0 pages, 0 results received)
QuestFinder	0	0	0	Not listed (0 pages, 0 results received)
Yahoo	0	0	0	Not listed (3 pages, 51 results received)

Test your URL in 75 international search engines

Once complete, a clear results screen is produced in HTML code within your browser. The data shows your site's ranking on each engine, or if you haven't been found at all. If your site is found, keep the test profile on disk so you can check the listings at a later date.

This is an integrated feature of TopDog, which will compare results, showing you how things develop in virtual marketing terms over time. You can also use this feature to see how your competitors are doing.

TopDog was developed and marketed in the US, but the programmers have recognised the Net as a worldwide medium, and the list of 75 search engines comprises a number of international and European-specific search engines.

As the marketing capability of the Internet is growing rapidly, especially in Europe, TopDog is well worth buying. After all, why spend time and money developing your site only to see it ignored because the search engines have failed to pick it up?

The price will be the deciding factor for many, especially small businesses, who'll appreciate the cheap exposure. You can upgrade to a full working copy for $95 (around £57), which gives you 12 months of free updates – versions two to four came out within five months of each other, so this could save you money in the long run.

After the first 12 months, you can opt to continue receiving these upgrades, which are initiated automatically each time you run the software – but it'll cost you $49 (around £29.40) a year.

Overall, TopDog appears good value for money. It's easy to use and requires little or no customising to perform effectively.

Charlie Young

★★★★☆

ON THE CD You'll find the free evaluation version of TopDog on this month's free cover CD

TopDog

Price *£57 + £29.40 a year thereafter*
Pros *Flawless operation with concise results*
Cons *You' ll need to run the full version to appreciate its power*
Contact *TopDog*
Phone *(001541) 535 8085*
www.topdog.com

If you're looking for an Internet service, look closely. With the new Connect service from Cable & Wireless there are no hidden costs – so there are no nasty surprises when you get your phone bill. For instance, Connect12 offers you unlimited Internet access, plus up to 12 hours of calls to the Internet, all for just £5.99 per month. You will also make great savings on the rest of your telephone bill – compared to BT – or we'll give you back double the difference.*

c&www.whatyouseeiswhatyouget

- Spend more time online without worrying about the phone bill.
- No matter how long you spend online we've got a package to suit you.
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Just call us to get connected.

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Please quote reference: RACING

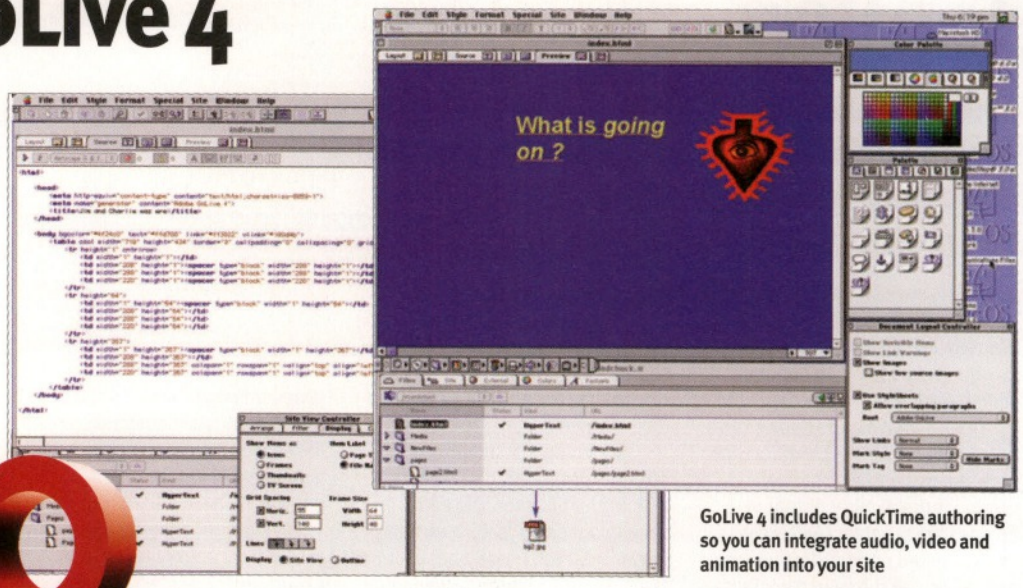
Try our interactive cost calculator at www.cwcom.net/savings and see how much you could save.

* For full details of our telephone and Internet call plans and our Price Pledge terms and conditions please see our price guide or call 0800 0923 017.

CABLE & WIRELESS

Adobe GoLive 4

Professional Web design software for developing your site on a Mac



GoLive 4 includes QuickTime authoring so you can integrate audio, video and animation into your site

Adobe's GoLive 4 is a powerful Web design program, comprising a substantial array of useful elements for easy and functional development of your Web site. It's more than a WYSIWYG editor because it manages your site's infrastructure – you can check your links and code syntax, and upload your site to your ISP using a built-in FTP controller.

Installation is simple – if you're a beginner, you can kick off with a 30 minute tutorial on basic Web design, followed by a session uploading your finished pages to your ISP.

The design interface of the program comprises three editors – Visual, Source and Outline – which give you flexibility for your page layouts. As you'd expect, the WYSIWYG editor is clean and lets you locate items with pixel precision. The Source editor shows the HTML code using colour-highlighted tags. If you're making alterations to your code manually, there's a syntax toggle for running debug routines.

The Outline editor is a wonderful tool that displays the Web page code as a series of titled instructions – it's similar in layout to a Mac hard drive. Click on an instruction and it displays function characteristics that you can edit – this is extremely useful when it comes to fine-tuning your layout.

Page layout is supported by site management palettes, which let you see the relative location of your pages and the destination of your links. Being able to follow the growth of your site in graphical format is useful, especially when you're making alterations to your file source.

A powerful search and replace tool is available for all your altering and updating needs. You can alter code sequences (which are stored as functions in a database) for repetitive use on your site. You can also change the function code – every location of that snippet on your site will be updated.

These code sequences, which do a variety of tasks, including dynamic HTML,are known as WebObjects, and the software comes with a large number of predefined functions on its Web database.

These functions include conditional behaviour for assessing browser types, and can handle various code types, such as ASP and XML. WebObjects theory is sound – it's adaptable and can be fashioned to your needs for each site you develop. This subject could be daunting for a novice, so you'll need a comprehensive code guide to learn and understand it.

When you open a new site, GoLive produces your index.html page. This reflects some rigid Web ethics which Adobe is attempting to impress upon you – so take note. Inside your home page, you can start by placing a precision snap grid so you can accurately position your elements on the screen – exactly as you'd find with desktop publishing packages.

Drag and drop icons are an important part of the design structure, providing a logical method for placing elements and their attributes. You can place an image by simply dragging the icon from the palette onto your page. To set the links, use another palette, the Inspector, with it's user-friendly 'point and shoot' tool.

With your link element highlighted, drag a wire from the point and shoot tool to the site window (which contains a list of the site folders and files) to the associated image or page file. You don't need to browse though – the site window can remain on the screen throughout.

In addition, this provides a quick visual tool for monitoring the location of files and directory layout as your site is constructed. But when you need all of these palettes open on the screen, it soon blocks your view with overlapping windows. With such a propensity of working palettes joggling for position on your screen, the minimum practical screen resolution has to be 1024 x 768.

You can use the drag and drop technique for colouring your text or backgrounds, and for setting body tag content. Styling your text is flexible, as is the preparation of frames and tables – all of which start with default settings with drag and drop icons.

To make an alteration, you simply highlight the item and change the characteristics in the Inspector window. The software supports Cascading Style Sheets and is supplemented by substantial material in the manual.

New to this edition of GoLive is QuickTime authoring which lets you add audio, video and animation to your Web site, which is comprehensive and useful.

The use of HTML and the breakdown of the particular functions – such as the head tag information – is well explained in the manual. It takes you through every subject, using detailed examples of how the functions relate to the Web.

This includes specific tools that introduce harmony to your days of Web site designing, such as download preview modes – a useful feature – and the extensive FTP upload and download controller.

The manual is useful to the novice, covering everything from background colours to understanding databases for importing information onto a Web site. Adobe has taken time to prepare a gentle introduction to GoLive – a short version of the manual takes you through the basic functions of laying out and uploading your pages, as well as introducing you to GoLive's functional approach.

GoLive is a subtle upgrade – the improvements aren't substantial compared to the last edition, but they tighten up the general functionality of the software.

Any new software for the uninitiated can be daunting, and GoLive is no exception. But if you want to develop a professional approach to Web site development, it's as good as any WYSIWYG editor on the market. Adobe will release a PC version in the near future.

Charlie Young

★★★★★

Adobe GoLive 4

Price *£210*
Pros *No complaints over content – GoLive is a complete package*
Cons *Difficult for the novice to get to grips with, including jargon-heavy documentation*
Contact *Adobe*
Phone *(0181) 606 4000*
www.adobe.com

CD-ROM BUSINESS CARD

View Card

Impress your customers with the business card that houses a CD-ROM

The View Card has been designed as a revolutionary business card – give it to your customer and you're giving them access to information about your company, your products, and even a direct connection to your Web site.

Packed into the CD strip on the bottom of the card are 15 megabytes of data – that's 1,000 still pictures, 3,000 pages of text, a one-hour slide show or 100 seconds of video and audio. The card carries all the software it needs to read its own data and will launch as soon as you put it into your CD-ROM drive.

The View Card installs itself and establishes a connection to the Web using its own browser

When the Internet version of the card is inserted, it checks your PC for a modem or ISDN adapter, identifies which country you're in, and chooses a phone number to dial. It makes a connection, configures the IP protocols and connects to a server on the View-base network, which is tied into IBM's global network.

It then heads for a specific HTML page and views it using a browser which – you've guessed it – is also included on the card. You don't even need an ISP account or any technical knowledge.

The downside of this innovative product is its price – it isn't a casual giveaway item. The promoters aren't too specific, but it'll cost you 'several pounds' per unit, or less than £5 each for a bulk order. So you're more likely to use it as a promotional item at a trade show than as an everyday business card.

Another issue is it doesn't give you full access to the whole of the Web. It's more likely to restrict you to areas within the View-base network and to the pages of businesses who have paid to be included. In that sense, it's a limited portal, but the card we tested worked perfectly.

BEST BUY

One minor niggle is that it insisted on installing data on the hard drive, rather than working from the CD drive, but the company presentation was impressive.

It might be a gimmick, but it's one of the most innovative products we've seen for a while.

Andrew Starling

★★★★★

View Card

Price *Around £5*
Pros *Great fun, useful for promotions*
Cons *Destined for a life of corporate presentations*
Contact *View-base*
Phone *(01980) 670950*
www.ibase.be

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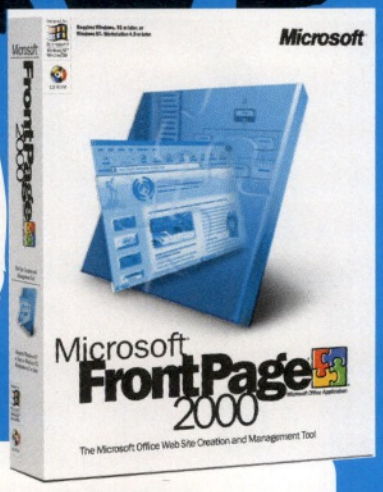
Fax: +1-604-688-8934	Fax: +32-2-706-5116	Fax: +41-1-274-22-45	Fax: +49-89-92185-295	Fax: +44.171.681.1862	Fax: +33.15.301.3155	Fax: +49.69.25577.012	Fax: +61.29.475.0231

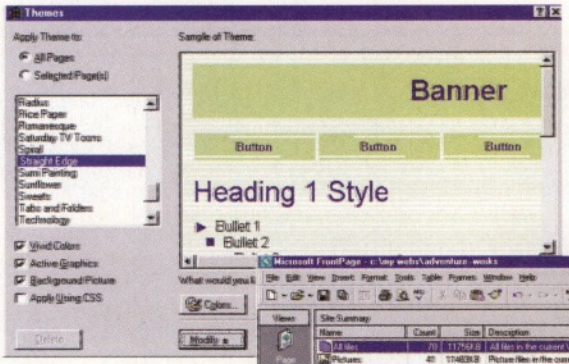
*Prices exclude naming authority fees. Setup fee: £29.95 for the EZsite web site package. Prices and features subject to change without notice. All trademarks are the property of the respective owners.

FRONTPAGE 2000



Microsoft FrontPage is the world's leading Web site management and creation tool, combining ease of use, innovative imaging tools and seamless integration with the Microsoft Office family of applications. Whether you're creating personal Web pages or professional intranet and Internet sites, FrontPage delivers a complete solution for creating and managing Web sites that get noticed

Here are just a few of the exciting functions FrontPage 2000 has to offer:



● **Unified Editor and Explorer View** – A great feature of FrontPage is the single interface. It speeds up entire team performance because it works for everyone – such as graphic designers with no programming experience and programmers who have no design expertise.

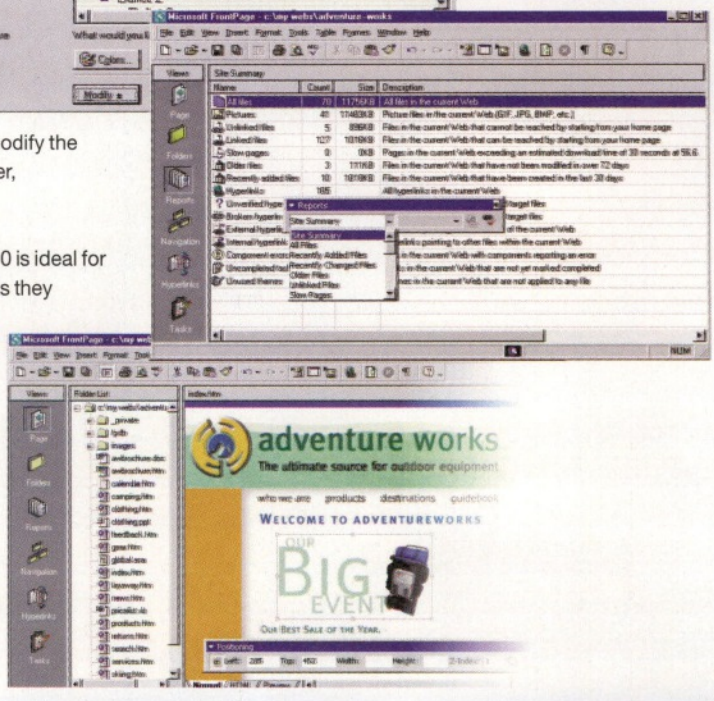
● **Better HTML Editing** – Editing existing HTML and scripts (including ASP) is worry-free in FrontPage. You can use HTML that's been created in other tools because FrontPage doesn't modify the code. It'll preserve features like the tag and comment order, capitalisation and even white space.

● **Themes for great-looking Web sites** – FrontPage 2000 is ideal for media companies that demand sophisticated Web sites as they expand broadcast and content online. The support for more advanced templates in FrontPage 2000 lets companies create customised sites for every demanding customer.

● **Site Management Reports** – FrontPage 2000 offers 14 new site management reports that give you quick and easy access to your page statistics.

● **Pixel-Perfect Positioning** – You can pick up an image or an item in the WYSIWYG view and move it anywhere in the page. Within the code, FrontPage shows the exact positioning of the item.

● **Easy re-use of Objects** – With FrontPage, a developer can go over to the library, pull up an embedded object in Edit view, and simply copy and paste it into a new Web page without having to retype the code.



"FrontPage is like a race car. You can take a person off the street and sit them in front of it, and they'll do good work. They'll get decent results. Put Mario Andretti behind the wheel, and you'll set world records."

Paul Urfi, director of technology and streaming media services at Online Video Network, Inc.

FRONTPAGE 2000 High Spots

Creating a Web site has never been easier

Front Page 2000 integrates easily into FrontPage Editor and FrontPage Explorer. Office users can save Office documents and Web pages directly to FrontPage sites – it's as easy as saving a file to your hard drive.

Work with Microsoft Office and save time

The combination of common Office tools, the ability to save Office documents directly to your pages, and easy database creation make getting started with FrontPage as easy as Microsoft Word.

Easily manage and update your Internet or team Intranet sites

Microsoft FrontPage 2000 makes it simple to update your Web and monitor your site's performance and condition. Enhanced collaboration features make working on your Web content easier than ever.

Create exactly the site you want

Tools in Microsoft FrontPage 2000 make it simple to create great-looking Web sites. It's quick and easy to add What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) tables and hyperlinks, as well as graphics, thumbnail images, frames, search forms, hit counters, and numbered or bulleted lists.

HTML Editing Features (better than using Notepad)

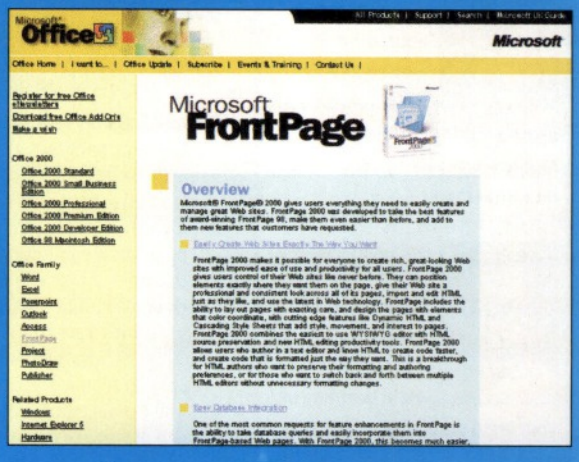
The Microsoft FrontPage 2000 Web site creation and management tool gives you more control over the Web than ever. You can edit or import existing HTML and scripts, and worry-free HTML and ASP Source Preservation mean FrontPage 2000 will not modify your code.

Create, edit, manage, and update your site – all from one easy to use application

The multiple views in FrontPage 2000 let you see all the files in your Web page. You can also run reports to find slow pages and older files, and set up your site's navigational structure to keep track of your Web tasks. For example, you can create and edit Web pages in Page View, use Folders View to see all the content on your Web site, then decide the best way to link your pages in the Navigation View.

Want more?

For more information on FrontPage 2000, including the latest news, FrontPage user group details and where to buy the program, visit the FrontPage site at www.microsoft.com/uk/frontpage. Or to subscribe to the monthly FrontPage Newsletter, simply send an email to: frontpage@office2000.co.uk



FrontPage 2000 Trial CD now available

Now you've read about all the great new features in FrontPage 2000, you'll probably want to try it out for yourself. To order your FREE 45-day trial CD of FrontPage 2000, simply visit www.microsoft.com/uk/frontpage and follow the basic instructions.

webprofe

Expert help

If you've got a Net problem, email it to us and we'll field it to our distinguished panel of experts. From Web design to legal advice (and let's face it, that would normally cost a fortune), we can answer your questions. We'll also be picking the best reader's tip each month, so get them rolling in – the best one wins a £200 online shopping spree

Readers' questions are answered by our panel of experts. Send your query to faq@internet.emap.com

Richard Baguley is our associate editor. He'll answer your technical questions on everything from relational databases to digital signatures.

Mike Slocombe has designed sites for clients that include Snickers, Direct Connection, NCR and Evolution. He also produces Urban 75, an irreverent online magazine. Mike will answer all your Web design queries.

Roger Gann is a freelance computer journalist. If you're having trouble with dial-up networking or your 56K modem isn't talking to your ISP, he's your man.

Michael Chissick is the head of Internet and IT law at Field Fisher Waterhouse. He'll be ruling on your legal problems.

Andrew Starling is our technology editor. He'll deal with site creation and telecoms queries.

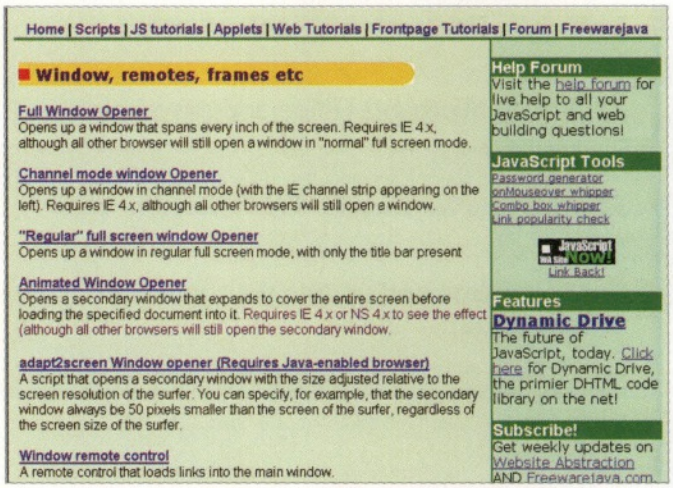
We regret that we cannot answer any queries other than those printed in the magazine.

Too many books spoil the broth

Q I maintain a Web site for a publisher of family histories. The publications page has over 100 books. I've created an alphabetical drop-down list of 150 names that occur in the book titles. When people select a name from the list, I want it to jump to all the books that contain that name. I've tried anchors, but they don't recognise multiple references. It probably needs a database, but can I use JavaScript?

Len Nicholls

wagner.nicholls@t-online.de



Web site Abstraction offers free JavaScripts and applets, as well as online tutorials

Richard Baguley replies: You can open several windows at once using the JavaScript Onclick event. This can do a number of tasks when you click on a button, such as opening a new window or updating the contents of multiple windows. Check out Web site Abstraction (at **http://wsabstract.com**) for examples of how to do this.

But I'd recommend using a database or an e-commerce system instead. If you use JavaScript, you'll have to change the HTML every time you want to add a new book or reference to your list – it's easier to add information into a database and then update your database file.

Your visitors would also be able to do their own searches, which would be a useful feature. There are products that'll help you to do this, such as FileMaker (at **www.filemaker.co.uk**) or Microsoft Access (**www.microsoft.com/msoffice**), both of which can export information from a database straight to a Web page.

You can also look at high-end systems such as ColdFusion, which lets you do complex queries on the contents of your database.

Many of the ISPs (such as Corpex, at **www.corpex.com**) are starting to offer database systems as part of their Web hosting packages, so it's worth asking the host of your site if it provides this kind of service.

You could also use an e-commerce system such as Actinic Catalog (from Actinic at **www.actinic.com**) or iCat's Electronic commerce suite (at **www.icat.com**).

These systems are designed to simplify the way your visitors search for your products, so they'd be able to handle your selection of books, and you could sell them straight from your site.

Counting on you

Q I'm designing a Web site for a celebrity and I'd like to know how to include a hit counter. I've heard of HIT! but I'm sure there are loads more. All I want is something to tell me how many times the home page has been visited.

Armen Kanikanian

armen47@yahoo.co.uk

Mike Slocombe replies: You should be able to access a simple counter script from your own ISP. But remember that counters can slow down your page and make it look pretty ugly.

If you must have a hit counter, the good news is you can hide it by making it one pixel square and referring to it on a separate page. Here's an example of the kind of script you'll need to put on your 'index.html' page.

<IMG SRC="/cgi-bin/nph-count?width=6&link=/index.html" width= "1" height= "1">

And then type this into your separate counter page:

<IMG SRC="/cgi-bin/nph-count?width=6&link=/index.html">

There are a host of free counter services, with extras such as visitor breakdown statistics, geographical analysis and a mass of numbers and graphics. Most of these counter providers will insist on slapping their logo on your page, and some providers are rumoured to sell your email details to spammers, so be warned.

Check out Showstat Statistics (at **www.showstat.com**) and Web Counter (at **www.digits.com**) for free counters that are easy to set up. There's a comprehensive list of free counter providers at **http://home.netvigator.com/~artyeung/free/zecount4.htm)**. MacKiDo (at **http://mackido.com/Web/Counters.html**) looks at general hit rates and counters.

Top reader's tip wins £200 voucher

I've found a great site that I think your readers will be interested in. Check out **www.bookmarklets.com**. The designer, Steve Kangas, got the idea to put JavaScript in bookmarks – this lets you perform a variety of tasks by clicking only one button.

You can highlight a word in an HTML document, press the Search bookmarklet, and the JavaScript will automatically send the word to the search engine and present you with the search results. There are ready-made bookmarks for most of the major search engines at **www.bookmarklets.com/tools/search/index.phtml**.

Using some examples of the bookmarklets, you could hide all the banners on a Web site, remove the background pictures and extract all of the email addresses from an HTML document.

Mike
mike_dk@usa.net

Thanks for the tip, Mike – the idea originated in Netscape's JavaScript guide, but it's a useful site and you don't even have to install anything, so it's easy to use.

The Bookmarklets site offers free tools for 'power surfing'

Mike wins himself a £200 shopping spree at top audio-visual online shopping Web site Unbeatable. With over 2,500 products available for your perusal and purchase, it's the place to find everything from a roll of film to a widescreen telly. Backed by mail order specialists, Capital Sound & Vision, all orders are despatched by first class post or next day courier.
www.unbeatable.co.uk

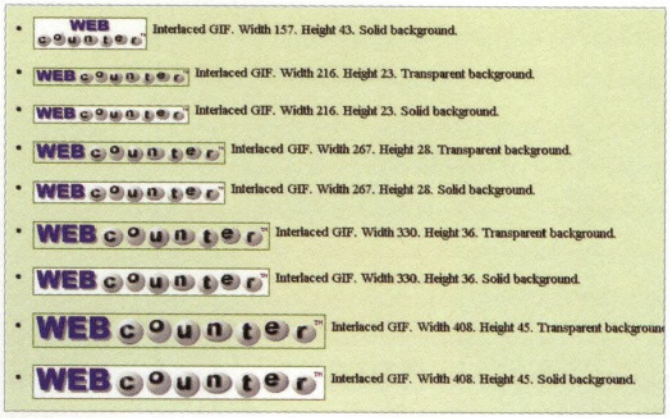
unbeatable.co.uk

Font crisis

I'm designing a Web page and I need a font called Manson, but I can't find it anywhere on the Internet. Can you help?
Carina Gottelli
Edca.london@saqnet.co.uk

Mike Slocombe replies: You'll find the Manson font at Astigmatic's Web site at **www.astigmatic.com/aoeff/manson.html**. There are many online resources offering free or shareware fonts, but the quality can be extremely variable.

My favourite font sites are the excellent Chank (**www.chank.com/freefonts.html**) and Swankarmy (**http://cgi.swanky..org/army**). You'll find masses of fonts at **http://voyager.cns.ohiou.edu/~sadkins/web_library/fonts/font_archive** and **http://people.wiesbaden.netsurf.de/~kikita/mega.htm**.



Web Counter has a step by step guide to help you create a hit counter for your site

Trademarks in the code

I was showing a colleague the HTML source of a public site (www.esi.co.uk) and noticed there were a number of trademarks in ESI's list, such as Reuters, Bloomberg and Telerate. This raises the question of using someone else's name in a site for promotion of a different business. Is this legal and, if not, what can the owner of the trademark do about it?
David Quarterman
cis1@coris.co.uk

Michael Chissick replies: Meta tags are key words that are embedded in code or invisible to browsers. Some search engines will rank a site based on this hidden code. In the US, trademark owners have started to take action against the use of their trademarks by others. But whether using trademarks in invisible code – for the purpose of attracting people to your site – is a trademark infringement has still not been settled by law.

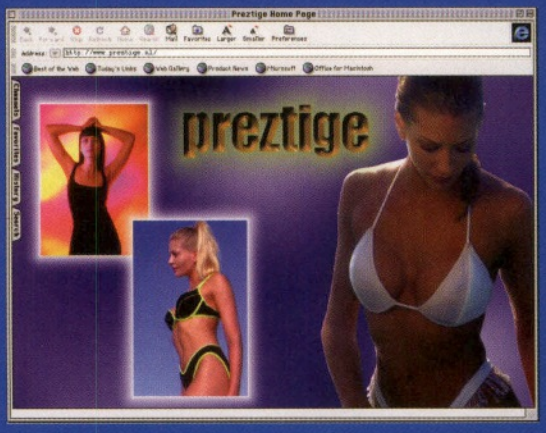
Oman, my email isn't working

I use BT Internet and tried to send an email to a friend at @gto.net.om in Oman. The BT Internet server instantly rejected it (although I can get through to other service providers in Oman). BT's helpdesk said these Oman servers are 'relay' and are not compatible with BT Internet's servers. It suggested using a Web-based email, such as Hotmail or Yahoo! What are the benefits of the alternative server technologies? And is this lack of compatibility a common problem for other major ISPs? To get mail through to gto.net.om, BT says it'd need to change all of its servers.
Kirsty Johns
johns.johns@btinternet.com

Andrew Starling replies: We took this matter to BT – it turns out the gto.net.om domain in Oman is unusual because it doesn't accept POP3 mail.

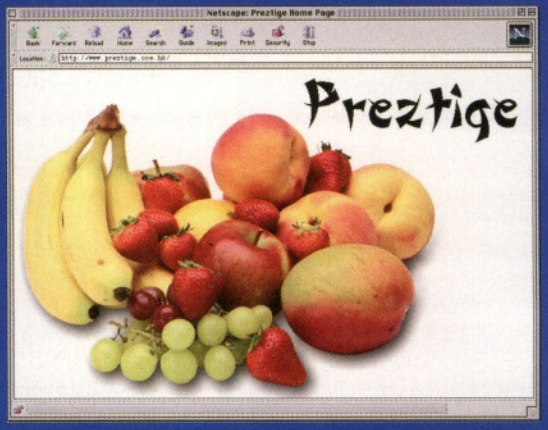
Email generally runs on one of two systems – POP3 or the Web.

And you thought it was *your* company name.



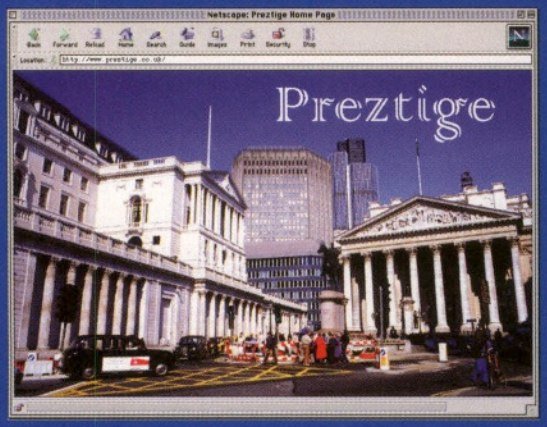
www.preztige.nl

(ADULT ENTERTAINMENT SERVICES, AMSTERDAM)



www.preztige.com.hk

(FRUIT WHOLESALERS, HONG KONG)



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Most email servers will accept either POP3 or Web-based email, but some still don't

POP3 is faster and more flexible. Web-based email is fine, but it's slower and you can't do much with your mail and mailbox.

Most people make sure their email servers can accept POP3 mail as well as Web-based mail. You've found one of the rare exceptions, Kirsty. Gary Hurr, managing editor of BT Internet, told *Internet Magazine* that he'd never come across this problem before.

We're all a bit puzzled as to why someone would want to run an email server that doesn't accept POP3 mail. Most of the ISPs in our listings wouldn't be able to get through to this particular Oman domain.

Time to update your browser

I read your news piece, Will the Net survive the millennium? (April issue). It was interesting to see the Web will be relatively unaffected compared to general IT areas after the millennium. But I've heard many rumours that older versions of browsers will not survive into the year 2000. Is this true?
Fiona Smith
fsmith@campden.co.uk

Andrew Starling replies: The major browser companies – Microsoft and Netscape – have plenty of Y2K compliance information on their Web sites. The Microsoft site (**www.microsoft.com/technet/year2k/product/user_list.asp**) says IE4.01 and above is Y2K compliant and IE3 can be made compliant using a patch. You should download IE5 to be safe.

The Netscape site (**http://home.netscape.com/products/year2000/readiness/clientstatus.html**) says versions 4.07 or higher of Navigator and Communicator are Y2K compliant. Any earlier browsers might have problems when they come into contact with Java on a Web site.

You can check the version of your browser by clicking Help, followed by About. See our feature on how to survive the Millennium Bug on page 54 for more details.

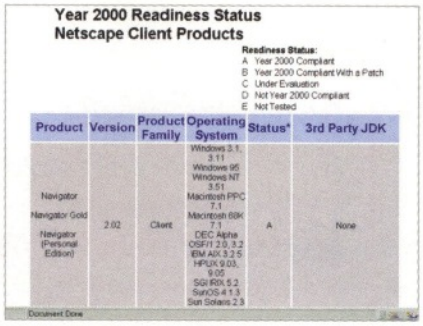
You're always engaged

I've heard there's a piece of software which will alert you to incoming phone calls while you're on the Internet. Do you know where I can get it from?
Catriona Smith
catriona@goodjim.clara.co.uk

Roger Gann replies: Yours is a good point, Catriona. Most home users only have one phone line and this tends to get tied up for long periods when you're online. Unfortunately, there's no solution that I know of in the UK.

There's a service in the US, but your callers have to call you via a toll-free number, which isn't quite what you want.

It's a toll-free Internet voice mailbox called Pagoo (**www.pagoo.com**), which helps you avoid missing important calls while you're



Netscape and Microsoft both have information and compliance tests for your software on their sites

Top question wins a pager and Mini-Mail service

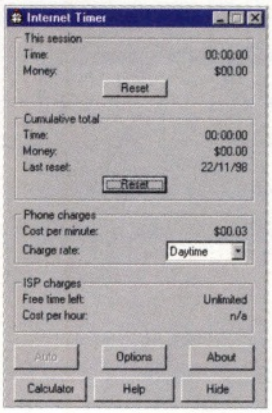
Sky high phone bills

Q Living in your typical Aussie and Kiwi household in London usually means lots of people moving through. We have a PC connected to the Net and we're happy with our ISP. But we always seem to accrue massive BT phone bills due to the incredible amount of time we're online. We tell people to disconnect once they're inside their free email accounts, but it's almost never done. Apart from ditching Windows 98 and installing NT, is there any way we can police the multiple access we have to our single Internet connection?
Allan Byrne
allan@netvillage.co.uk

Roger Gann replies: Make sure your inactivity timeouts are set on low. To do this in IE4, select View, then Internet Options and click the Connections tab. Click Settings and set the 'Disconnect if idle time' to five minutes. In IE5, click the Tools menu, select Internet Properties and click the Connections tab. Select the DUN connection, click the Settings button, then the Advanced button.

Your question about allocating the phone bill is more difficult – there's no shortage of Internet phone timer utilities which will do all the things you want – but only for one user. Most generate a logfile which lets you import it into a spreadsheet for further analysis.

One of the best utilities is a British utility called Internet Timer from Rat Software (**http://free.prohosting.com/~rats/ratsoft**). This sits in your system tray and lets you establish up to five different rates for daytime, evening and weekend. It automatically detects active connections and lets you establish an alarm that warns you when you've reached your budget limit. It displays time and cost for your current session and your current billing period, and lets you keep track of ISP costs. You can enter the amount of free time you get each month and/or an hourly charge. An expense calculator helps you to establish your alarm settings.



Internet Timer warns you when you've reached your budget limit

Net Timer Pro (from **www.hotfiles.com**) sits in your Windows 95 system tray and automatically starts a timer whenever a SLIP/PPP Internet connection is made. It keeps running totals of time spent for each session, day and month. You can also save a log of all connection time. OPC is another candidate – this timer can be configured to play a WAV file at specified intervals, reminding you that the clock is ticking. A logfile can be kept, and you can generate graphical reports.

Consider shifting over to a cheaper telco – Cable and Wireless has launched a phone service aimed at the Internet user. The Connect packages combine Internet access and telephone charges. Each subscription offers five email addresses and 20Mb of Web space. The Connect 12 scheme costs £5.99 a month and includes up to 12 hours of Internet call time. The Connect 35 scheme costs £14.99 per month and includes up to 35 hours, and the Connect 75 scheme costs £29.99 per month with up to 75 hours of Internet call time.

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online – if your line is busy, your caller hears your personal greeting and is asked to leave a voice message in your mailbox. If you're connected to the Internet at the time of the call, the Pagoo Desktop Agent alerts you and lets you listen to the voice message. It costs $3.95 (around £2.40) per month.

The Call Waiting phone service beeps when another incoming call is detected. This is fine for voice calls, but modems don't like the beep and will often drop the line. Perversely, this would tell you that you've got an incoming call, but it's rather abrupt. You could then use 1471 to call the caller back.

The simplest solution is to use BT Call Minder (an answering machine service which costs £6 per quarter from **www.shop-athome.bt.com**). It'll take a message for you when your phone is engaged, such as when you're online. Don't forget to say your email address on your outgoing message – if someone is desperate to contact you, at least they can get through to you online!

These sorts of problems will disappear when we all have broadband links to the Net and Voice over IP becomes a reality.

Incapable cable

In Belgium, we can connect to the Internet through our TV cable. This is cheap (you pay a monthly or annual subscription and pay nothing for your calls, so it's much cheaper than connecting through a free ISP) and faster then ISDN. Is there a company in the UK which offers a connection through your TV cable? If not, how can I get faster Internet access for a reasonable price – ISDN in the UK is too expensive.

Jean-Philippe Tytgadt
jean-philippe.tytgadt@telebot.net

Richard Baguley replies: Several companies have experimented with Internet access over TV cables, but it's only available in a limited number of areas.

NTL, for instance, is selling a cable modem service for £40 a month, which works at 512k per second, compared to the 50k or so you'd get from your modem.

The downside is, it's only available in the Guilford area, but NTL is planning to offer the service via its cable franchises later this year. You can get more details at **www.ntl.co.uk /cablemodems**. Meanwhile, Cable & Wireless (at **www.cwcom.co.uk**) is also planning Internet access as part of its digital cable service, although it doesn't have a release date yet.

UK cable companies have been slow to get on the Internet bandwagon. The technology has been available for some time (the cable TV Internet service @Home in the US has nearly half a million customers), but none of the cable TV companies have sold Internet access over their connections.

You can get a permanent leased line – but it'll cost you several thousand pounds a year, or you can look at DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) services, which give fast, permanent connections over the phone line.

Family browsing

I've connected my PC at home to the Internet after considerable persuasion from my kids. My only concern is the amount of pornography. Is there a package I can buy to secure these pages from being opened?

Elin Lawler
ECL@barkad.co.uk

Andrew Starling replies: We're often asked this question, Elin. That's why we covered the subject in the *Family Values* feature in our last issue (page 54). We looked at four software protection products – Net Nanny (**www.netnanny.com**), Cyber Patrol (**www.cyberpatrol.com**), Cybersitter (**www.cybersitter.com**)and Surfwatch (**www.surfwatch .com**).

The Family Values article is available from our Faxback service on page 123. Alternatively, you can order a copy of July's Internet Magazine through our back issues department (01858 468 888).

Legal brief: Spam

The issue of unsolicited mail continues to be big news. As Virgin Net issues the first legal proceedings in England, Michael Chissick considers the legal position and outlines the developments in regulating spam

Spamming provides a cheap and efficient form of direct marketing for those seeking to promote their goods, services or views, but it can be a major irritant for Web users and ISPs. You have to pay to receive spam and it can cause networks to crash. So can anything be done to prevent it?

There have been many court cases in the US on the legality of spamming. A court in Sacramento, California, has ruled that a former Intel employee trespassed onto the company's systems when he repeatedly spammed Intel employees with email promoting his anti-Intel site. The position has yet to be tested under English law. But that's set to change.

Virgin Net has issued the first writ in England against a spammer. The ISP is suing a customer for breach of contract after they sent more than 250,000 junk emails in an attempt to sell a database of email addresses. The contract between Virgin Net and the customer did not allow the sending of material that would cause annoyance, inconvenience or anxiety.

The European Commission is aware of the concern about spamming. According to Novell, unsolicited email costs British and Irish businesses around £5 billion a year. In an attempt to protect businesses and consumers from spam, the European Parliament has voted that Web users will have to register themselves on national lists if they don't want to receive spam. This form of opt-out already exists for direct marketing by phone, post and fax.

But observers say the Parliament's decision has not gone far enough and therefore represents a victory for spammers – experience has shown that opt-out methods don't work. Nevertheless, the decision shows that the European Commission is taking an increasing role in regulating e-commerce. The issue of regulating spam is far from over.

Michael Chissick is head of the IT and On-Line Law Group at City law firm Field Fisher Waterhouse. He can be contacted at mpc@ffwlaw.com

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Liven up your Web pages

[without spending a penny]

Once you've uploaded your site, you can introduce some stunning new features. Cliff Joseph tells you how to improve the appeal of your pages without having to dip into your pockets

Some people get as far as creating and uploading their site and decide the whole thing is too much like hard work and never go beyond this stage. But you wouldn't be reading this magazine if you were one of those people. You're probably already thinking about version 2.0 of your site, and how you can make your pages look even better.

Fortunately, there's plenty of free things you can do to liven up your Web pages. One of the simplest things you can do is search for some clip art graphics. I typed "clip art" into a Webcrawler search engine and it came back with a list of more than 3000 Web sites – most of which have stacks of clip art and stock photography that you can download free of charge.

You're bound to find lots of pictures of cute animals and wholesome parents smiling adoringly at equally wholesome kids – this gets thrown in free of charge with most DTP programs. But there's also a lot of useful artwork that's specifically designed for your own pages.

Backgrounds and textures

One simple improvement is to use a nice background image. You could use a large high quality image, such as a colour photograph as your background – but remember that large files will take your visitors longer to download. A better choice is to go for a simple texture, such as a marble or stone effect.

The thing to remember is that background images can be tiled. If the image is too small to fill the entire page, it can be repeated over and over again, like a floor tile, in order to fill the whole page. The image data is repeated from the original image file – keeping the size of the page low, so it doesn't take too long to download.

A small JPEG file containing a marble texture of 100 pixels wide and 100 pixels high would only be 3-4Kb in size. Tiling this image lets you create a solid marble background that fills an entire page, but it still downloads quickly. If you want to experiment with backgrounds and textures, desktopPublishing.com (**http://desktoppublishing.com/backgrounds.html**) has an area devoted to this type of artwork.

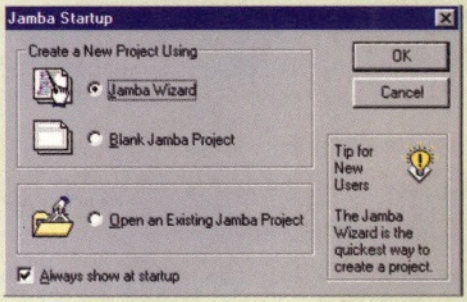
Animating your links

Buttons are another common type of Web graphic. If your Web site has lots of links to other pages, you can use button graphics to make the links more visually interesting. Import your button graphic and use your HTML editor's Link command to assign the link to the button, rather than creating an ordinary text link.

Well-chosen buttons and backgrounds can make the difference between an amateur Web page and one

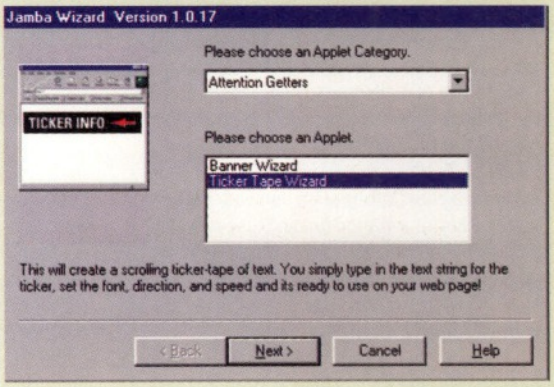
A lesson in Jamba

Step 1



Jamba is a program that lets you create Java applets without any programming skill. When you launch the program, you can build a new applet from scratch or let its built-in wizard do all the work for you. We'll use the wizard – just to show how easy it is.

Step 2



The wizard includes several different categories of applets for you to choose from, and there are a number of choices within each category. You'll want to make your Web pages stand out, so we'll choose the Attention Getters category. Ticker tape text is a commonly used effect, so we'll start with that.

Real Networks is the market leader in video technology for the Web – it lets you create and play high quality video and audio on your site

that looks slick and stylish. If you can't find image files that suit you, there are a number of free image-editing programs that let you create your own images.

A popular choice is Paint Shop Pro from Jasc Software (**www.jasc.com**). Jasc also has some good button designs that you can download from its site. If you think you're buttons need livening up, get rid of your simple still images and think about creating some animated and rollover buttons.

Animated buttons loop an animation sequence. You could have an animation of a bird that consists of two images – one with the bird's wings flapping up, and another with the wings down.

An animated GIF is simply a variation on the standard GIF graphics format, but instead of containing a single still image, the file consists of a series of animation frames that are played in sequence.

Animated GIFs are easy to use – you insert them into a Web page like an ordinary GIF file. And animations don't have to be used as buttons – animated headlines and logos make your site look more appealing than static pages.

Shareware and freeware

There are several shareware and freeware programs that can be used to create simple animations, such as GIFWorks for Windows PCs (**www.gifworks.com**) or GIFBuilder (**www.download.com**), which is popular with Mac users.

There are plenty of Web sites that have collections of animated GIFs that you can download. Two good places to start are the MediaBuilder Web site (**www.mediabuilder.com/graphicsagif.html**) and the Animation Factory (**www.animfactory.com**). The latter has thousands of animations that you can download, as well as a useful selection of links to other clip art sites and tutorials on creating Web graphics.

Rollovers are more complicated, but they add a professional touch to your Web site. A rollover button only changes appearance when the mouse cursor passes over, or clicks on the button. So the button appears to move forward slightly when the mouse passes over it and switches to a depressed state when you click on the button.

Rollover buttons work well and make a Web page feel alive because the page responds to your presence – even if you don't press any buttons. But it's more complicated to create animated GIFs, because the rollover action is controlled with JavaScript.

Free rollovers are less common on the Net, as it takes a bit more work to create

Get started with script writing

There's another type of software that you can use on your Web pages, although it's a bit more complicated than simply inserting animated GIFs or Java applets into a page.

When someone visits your Web site, the HTML pages are sent from your (or your ISP's) Web server to their browser. But it's also possible for your visitors to send information from their browsers back to your Web server.

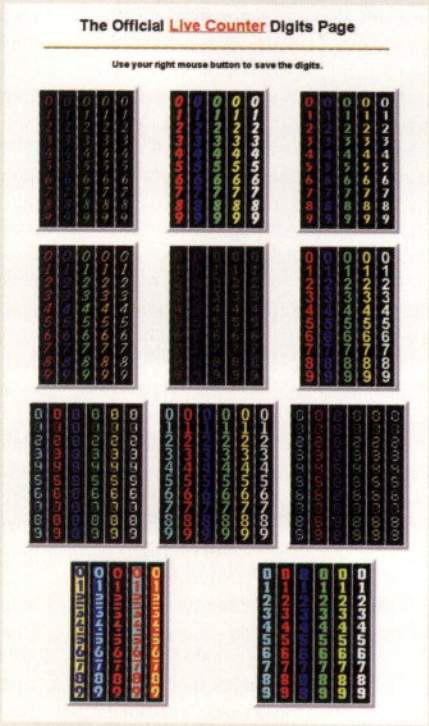
Most HTML editors let you add form items, such as tick-boxes or text windows, that people can use to enter information into your Web pages. This information doesn't just wander across the Internet by itself, though. Any data you enter into a Web page through a browser is handled by a program known as a CGI (common gateway interface) script.

There are many different types of CGI scripts, but they all work in the same way. When you enter information into your browser, a CGI script accepts that information and performs an action in response.

One of the most common uses of CGI scripts is to add a hit counter that records the number of visitors to your page. Whenever you enter the URL into your browser, a CGI script notes your request and updates a counter stored on its Web server. It then generates either a text or graphical representation of the current number of visitors and displays it on the page.

CGI scripts can perform a wide variety of tasks and are used on many e-commerce sites to handle transactions or to create online catalogues using information taken from a database. Writing CGI scripts can be a bit complicated, but there are plenty of free scripts available on the Net.

Java sites such as FreewareJava tend to include sets of CGI scripts as well, and if you want to add a hit counter to your site, there are a number of places that concentrate specifically on these, such as LiveCounter (**www.livecounter.com**) and WebCounter (**www.digits.com**).



You can find sites with CGI-based hit counters in many different styles, such as LiveCounter (right)

them, but you can still find some good ones if you know where to look. Web Clip Empire from Xoom (**http://xoom.com/clips/website**) is a good starting point. This is a large collection of stock photos, animated GIFs and rollover buttons that you can download free of charge – you need to register at Xoom's Web site to gain access to them.

The J word

That brings us to Java, Java applets and JavaScript. Java's a big kettle of fish and it might seem intimidating to newcomers, but you don't have to be an expert programmer to use free Java tools.

If you really want to learn about Java programming, there are plenty of tutorials you can use. The Freeware Java site includes links to several tutorials aimed at both beginners and the more experienced Java user. It also includes a wide range of ready-made Java applets and JavaScript programs that you can use without any programming skills at all.

If you're new to Java, remember it's a programming language, and an applet is a small application written in Java that performs a specific task, such as creating a ticker-tape text effect. JavaScript is a simple scripting language that carries the Java name because of a deal that was struck between Netscape and Sun (the company that invented Java).

Java applets and scripts can be used to add all sorts of bells and whistles to your site. Ticker tape text is a common Java effect, but you can use Java applets to create sophisticated animation effects that are beyond the scope of simple animated GIFs. The FreewareJava site (**http://freewarejava.com**) includes applets that create 3D graphics, rippling water and all sorts of graphical effects.

You can also use Java applets to add powerful features to your site, such as a search engine or a chat room. Another good source of Java freebies is JARS (**www.jars.com**) – the Java Applet Review Service has up to date lists of some of the best Java applets available.

All done for you

My favourite program is Jamba, which lets you create your own Java applets without having to do any programming. Jamba has a graphical interface that lets you drag and drop objects onto an area called the canvas. These objects can be anything from a simple graphic to a button or a link to a database.

You build an applet by combining objects on the canvas and editing the properties associated with each object. Jamba automatically creates the Java code required to make the applet work.

If you're a beginner, it also includes a wizard that'll help you create several useful effects (see our lesson in Jamba on page 103). Jamba's an excellent tool, and although it's sold commercially, you can get a free trial version from the Jamba site (at **www.jamba.com**).

Once you've got the hang of Java and animated GIFs, there's lots of free software that you can experiment with, although some of it can be complex. If you're really ambitious, there are several audio and video technologies, such as QuickTime and RealAudio, which you can use to create a real state of the art multimedia Web site. This software is free, but you'll need to put in a fair amount of work in order to create and edit the content.

If you're just getting started, the software we've looked at will be more immediately useful. It's free, easy to use, and it'll let you add some professional-looking features to your pages with the minimum of time and effort.

Audio and video on the Web

Putting video onto your Web site might seem a bit ambitious, but it's not as difficult as it might seem. And, at the moment, companies are falling over themselves to give you free video software. The market leader in Web video technologies is Real Networks, with its RealProducer product range.

The company also produces RealAudio, which lets you add high-quality audio files to your site. You can get free versions of most of Real's products from its site at **www.real.com**.

Apple was a late-comer to Web video. Its QuickTime video software has been available for several years, and is capable of producing excellent quality video. But Apple was slow to add streaming capabilities to QuickTime, which meant it wasn't ideal for use on the Internet.

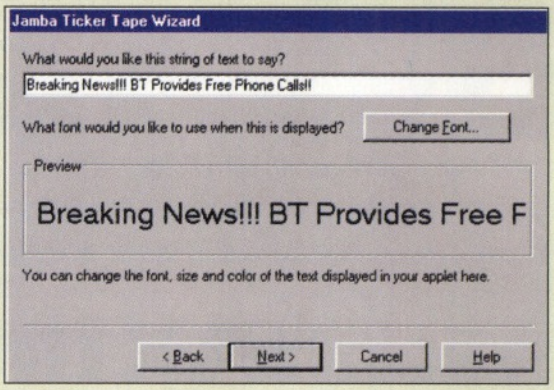
Streaming is the ability to start playing a file before it's been completely downloaded. Without streaming, you have to wait for the file to completely download, which can take ages if it's a large audio or video file. But with streaming you can start to play the file as soon as the first few frames of the video clip have been downloaded.

Version 4 of QuickTime now includes streaming and is available in both Mac and Windows versions from **www.apple.com**. The best thing about QuickTime is its versatility. A QuickTime file consists of a series of tracks. These tracks aren't simply limited to storing video. You can have tracks that contain audio only, as well as other types of data, such as text or 3D graphics. This makes it easy to add subtitles and graphics, such as an animated logo to a video clip.

Apple scored a PR coup when Lucasfilm chose the QuickTime format to release a new trailer for Star Wars Episode One – *The Phantom Menace*. According to Apple, George Lucas – who knows a thing or two about computer graphics – chose QuickTime because of its excellent image quality.

A lesson in Jamba

Step 3

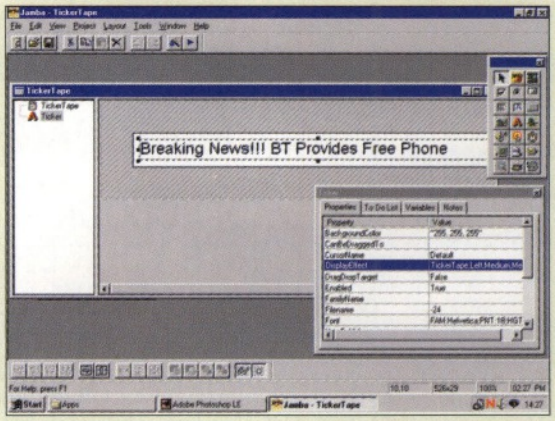


The first step is to type in the text you want to use. This dialog box also lets you alter the appearance of your text by selecting different fonts, point sizes and colours. Don't worry about the appearance of the text too much – you can edit it later if you need to.

Step 4

You can also edit other properties, such as the direction the text moves in and its speed. Once you've chosen all the relevant settings, Jamba automatically generates the Java programming code for the applet. But all you see is the program's graphical interface.

Step 5



Now that the wizard's done its work, you can preview your applet and edit it further using Jamba's main workspace. The most important feature here is the Properties palette in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen. This makes it easy to modify your applet by altering various properties.

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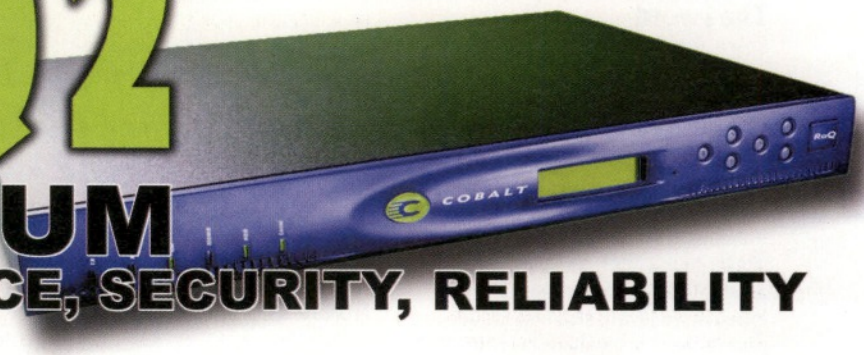

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Panoramas

Another useful feature is QuickTime VR. This lets you create panoramic scenes that can be rotated through 360° so you can create virtual reality environments. The Dallas Cowboys makes good use of panoramic video on its Web site (at **www.dallascowboys.com**) to provide a virtual reality tour of the stadium.

Apple has also announced that it will be making its QuickTime Streaming Server (QSS) an open-source product, similar to Linux. QSS is a heavy-duty server program for streaming video on the Internet, and is capable of handling high-volumes of video feeds.

This might not be something that most home users would want to get involved in, but professional broadcasters, such as the BBC and CNN, spend small fortunes on paying for a video server from companies such as Real Networks. The QuickTime Streaming Server could save these companies enormous amounts of money.

But it's not just the big boys, such as Apple and Real Networks, who are involved in the market for video on the Web. Geo Interactive produces a free program called Emblaze, which you can get from **www.download.com**.

QuickTime and RealVideo both require a browser plug-in before you can view your video files. The advantage of Emblaze is it doesn't require a plug-in, so it's compatible with the widest possible range of Web browsers.

Emblaze's video compression options aren't quite as sophisticated as those of QuickTime or RealVideo, but the program is easy to use and includes the basic streaming and compression tools that you'll need to get started with video on the Web.

The common disadvantage with these video formats is you'll need a video device to capture your video in the first place. You'll also have to put a fair amount of time and effort into learning how to edit your video. im

ON THE CD **You'll find plenty of the software we've talked about in this article on our free cover CD, including a copy of FrontPage Express**

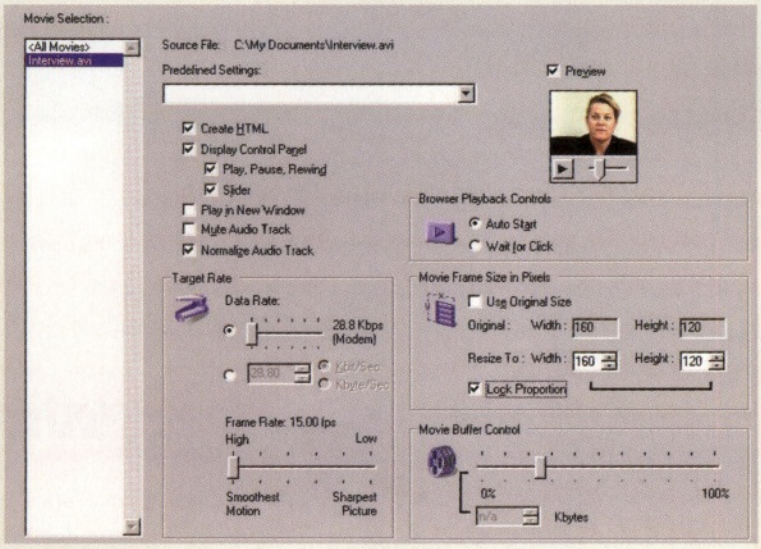
Creating Web video

Emblaze isn't the only free Web video software available, nor does it provide the best image quality. But its ability to play video without the use of a browser plug-in makes it compatible with a wide range of browsers.

The program provides all the basic features you need for video on the Web, such as streaming, and the ability to adjust the video compression settings for different download speeds. A 28.8k modem won't be able to handle video as efficiently as a faster modem or a broadband connection, such as ISDN.

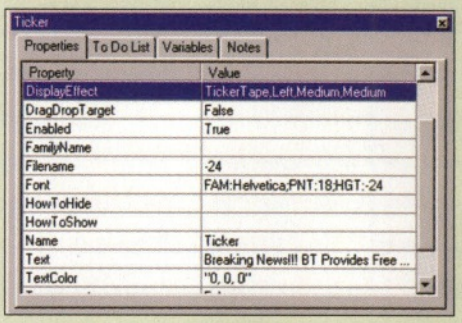
It's therefore important that you can adjust settings, such as the image size, and reduce the frame rate of the video in order to achieve high image quality. Of course, reducing the frame rate will decrease the quality of the animation, but you can experiment with the program's settings to find the configuration that works best for your particular set-up.

These features are all included in a single dialog box, so the program is easy to use. If you're serious about video on the Web, you might want to move onto the more sophisticated QuickTime or RealVideo formats, but Emblaze's simplicity makes it a good place to start.



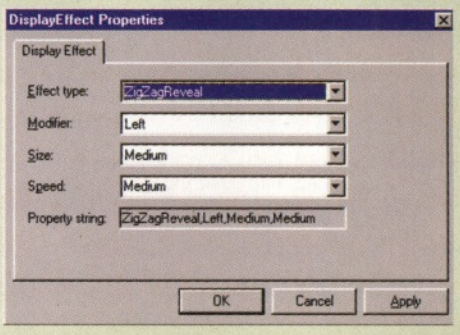
A lesson in Jamba

Step 6



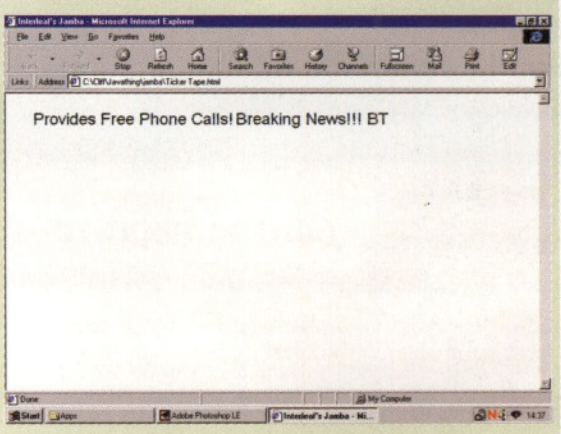
Here's a closer look at the palette. As you can see, it lists details such as the text you typed in, the font and the background colour. More importantly, it lists the display effect, which in this case is ticker tape. This is followed by references to the speed and direction of the animation.

Step 7

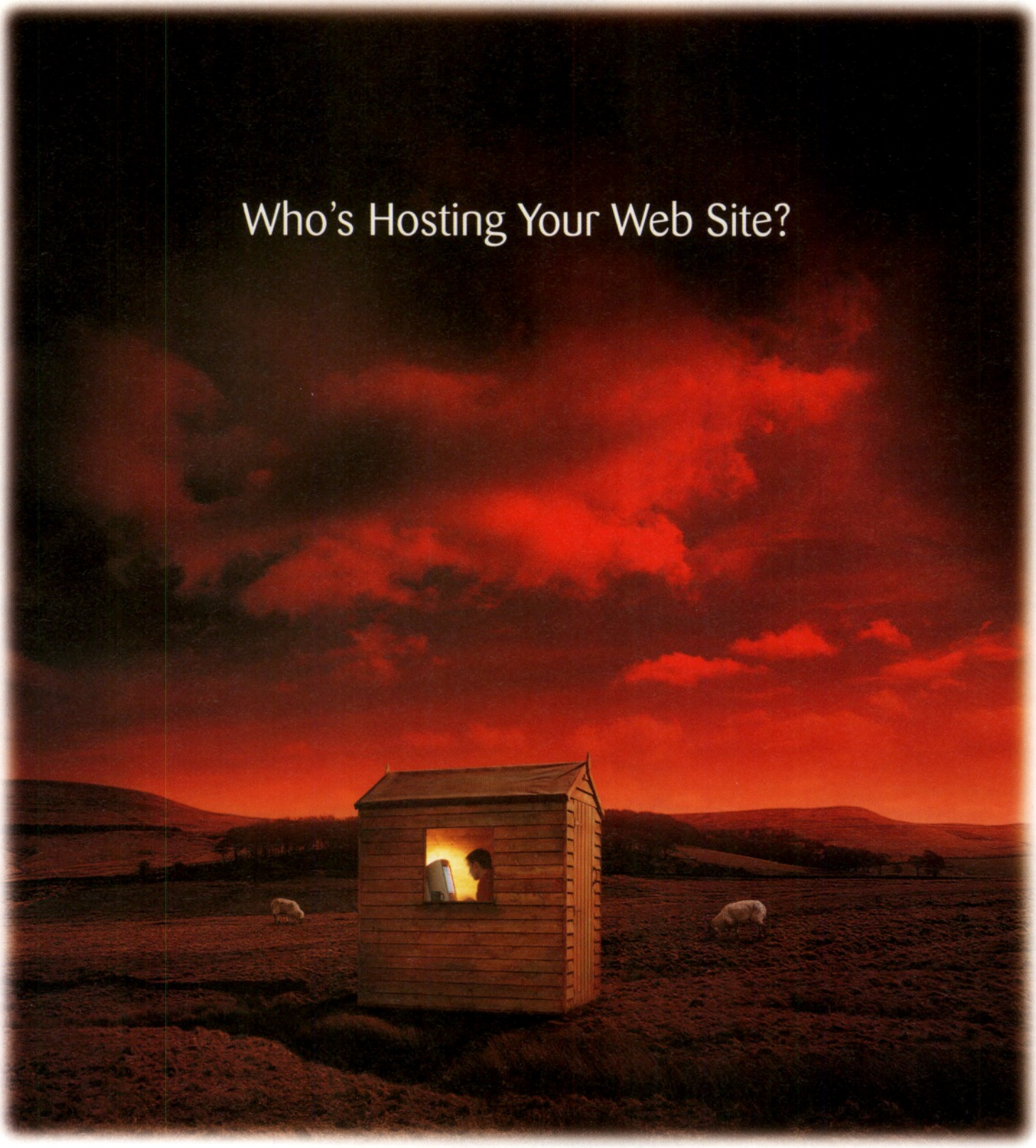


Clicking on the display effect activates another dialog box that lets you alter the effect. You could, for instance, replace the ticker tape effect with a zig-zag feature. This is what makes Jamba so useful – you can modify your applet using simple pull-down menus that don't require any programming skills.

Step 8



Finally, Jamba automatically creates a new Web page that contains your new applet. You won't find much else on the page, but it's a standard HTML page, so you can open it in any HTML editor and add whatever text, graphics and other content you want.



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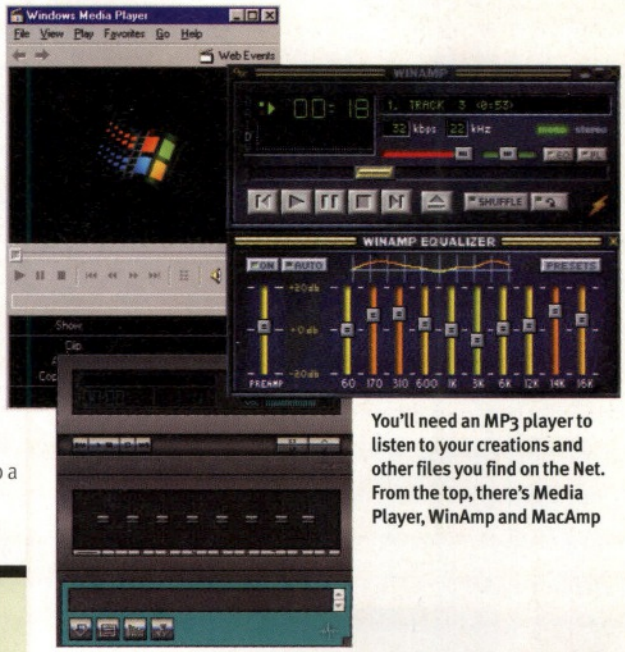
How to make your own MP3s

It's caused a real fuss, and the record industry would like to bury it, but the MP3 standard is set to be the future of music. Richard Baguley shows you how to create and use MP3 files

It's rather unusual for a file format to cause a fuss. After all, MP3 is just a standard for the compression and storage of audio files on computers. But it's caused a real furore, with record companies trying to discourage people from using it, and pundits proclaiming it as the next revolution in audio on the Net.

It's not difficult to understand why people are worried – the ISO/MPEG3 Layer 3 Standard (increasingly known as MP3, and that's what we'll be calling it here) gives a combination of excellent sound quality with small file sizes. This means MP3 files download quickly from the Internet, but sound nearly as good as CDs. They're computer files, so they can be copied an infinite number of times, and the copies will still sound as good as the original. It's not surprising that the record industry is viewing the increasing popularity of MP3 with some concern.

But MP3 is about more than pirating your CD collection. More and more musicians are realising that it's a great way to get their music out to fans without involving the hassle of getting CDs copied or even having to sign up with a record company. In our interview with Thomas Dolby last month, he described MP3 as "a real sea change that means a better deal for musicians and the public." With MP3, anybody can deliver their music to people with a minimum of hassle and little or no expense. It's also a great way to send any sort of sound content over the Internet, including (as we'll cover next month) free live broadcasts. The truth is, MP3 files are incredibly easy to create.



You'll need an MP3 player to listen to your creations and other files you find on the Net. From the top, there's Media Player, WinAmp and MacAmp

How MP3 files work

MP3 relies on the fact that the human ear doesn't work as well as you might have thought. Your brain simply can't process a lot of the information that the ear picks up, so why bother with it? Several years ago, a group of specialists worked out which types of sounds you can and can't hear using a process called psycho-acoustic modelling.

They found that the human ear is good at hearing mid-range pitch noises, but not so good at high or low pitched noises. Your ear can hear these noises, but it can't tell you much about them. So these noises can be heavily compressed without you noticing, using what's called perceptual coding.

The MP3 standard divides the frequency spectrum into 576 frequency bands and compresses each band according to how much information you can hear in that band. Low and high frequency noises are heavily compressed, while mid-range noises aren't compressed as much.

Sounds are also compressed in stereo – if a sound is identical on both stereo channels, it's only stored once in the MP3, but it's played back on both channels when the file is decompressed and played. All of this put together gives you small files and high quality. There is some loss of quality, but most people can't tell the difference between a CD and an MP3 track. More details of the compression and decompression process are available from **www.iis.fhg.de/amm/techinf/layer3/index.html**.

The software

Before you start creating MP3 files, you'll need the software to make and play them. For playing the files, PC users should get hold of a program called WinAmp (from **www.nullsoft.com**), which has almost become the *de facto* MP3 player, and can handle a huge range of other file formats.

The latest version of Microsoft's Media Player also handles MP3, but the version that's included with Windows 95 doesn't, so you'll have to download a new version from **www.microsoft.com/windows/mediaplayer**.

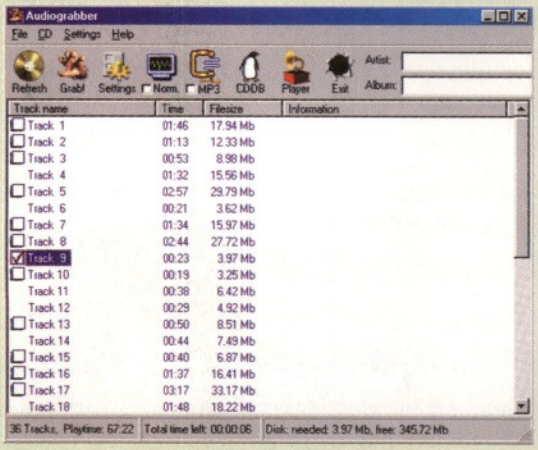
ON THE CD

You'll find plenty of the programs for creating and playing MP3s on our free cover CD

Creating an MP3

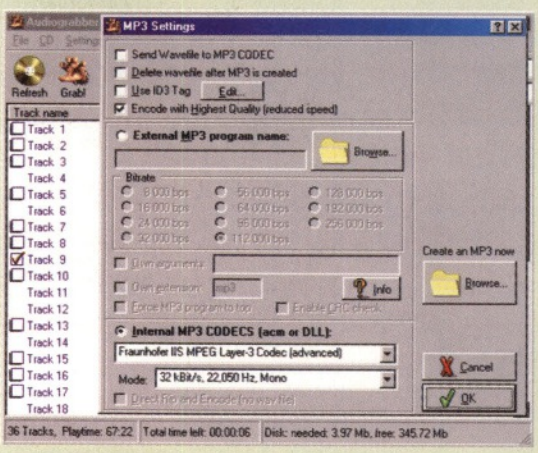
Once you've got all the software and read the legal brief, you're ready to start making MP3s. Creating them from your CDs is a simple process, so have a go at our five-step walkthrough

Step 1



You can create MP3 files from any source you want, but for this example we're going to create one from a CD track using the AudioGrabber program (available from **www.dezines.com/audio**). The first step is to insert your CD and select the track (or tracks) you want to use to create an MP3 file. The program gets the list of tracks from the CD and shows the size of the tracks – you select them by clicking the box on the left-hand side of the screen.

Step 2



Click on the MP3 button to open up the MP3 preference window. Make sure the Internal MP3 code is selected at the bottom of the window, and select the bit rate you want to use to encode the file. Remember, a low bit rate will make your files smaller and quicker to download, but it also reduces the quality. In this example, we've assumed you're creating an MP3 file from a CD, but the process is the same to do it from a sound file. Simply click on the Create an MP3 now button, select the file you want to use to create your MP3 file and the program will create it in the same way.

MP3s – the legal facts

There's plenty of software that'll let you take CDs and create MP3 files, but there are a few legal facts you should be aware of. First, it's illegal to make illicit copies of music in any format, so don't blame us if your CD ripping activities end up with being detained at Her Majesty's pleasure. Michael Chissick, of City law firm Field Fisher Waterhouse, says: "Unless you're given express permission – either by the copyright owner or by a licence on the CD – to make copies into an MPEG file, you're breaching the copyright owner's rights."

It's also illegal to put copies of music on the Web if you don't own the copyright or if you haven't got the permission of the copyright holder. It might be easy to rip your copy of Celine Dion's greatest hits and put it on your Web site as MP3 files, but it's also a breach of copyright – an offence that's punishable with heavy fines or imprisonment, and not just for crimes against musical taste.

"The placing of unauthorised copyright material on a Web site can have civil and criminal implications," says Chissick. "The record companies, in particular, are extremely concerned about the amount of unlicensed music that's available on the Web and there's a high risk that they'll take legal action against parties who breach their copyright."

You can be prosecuted even if you aren't making a profit – if you're doing it as a hobby, you could still end up in court. And don't assume you can't or won't be prosecuted because everybody else is doing it – the record companies are actively looking for people to make examples of at the moment, and it could be you they decide to pick on.

Mac users can use a program called MacAmp (available from **www.download.com**), which works in the same way as WinAmp, but it was written by a different company. Both WinAmp and MacAmp are shareware, but WinAmp will only cost you $10 (around £6) to register and MacAmp is currently free while it's being beta tested.

Once you've got yourself a program to play the files, you'll need program to create them. Again, there are plenty of options, but I'd recommend Jackie Franck's AudioGrabber, available from **www.audiograbber.com-us.net**. If you don't like this program, there's a good list of alternatives at **http://mp3.com/software/windows/allinone.html**. AudioGrabber lets you take the digital audio data direct from your CD (assuming you have a CD that can do this), save it to your hard disk and create an MP3 file – all in one manoeuvre.

The options for Mac users are a bit more complicated – you'll have to use several programs to achieve what AudioGrabber does on the PC. See **www.mp3.com/faq/making.html** for details of the programs you'll need.

The hardware

You can create MP3files from any source (including a microphone), but if you want to make them from CDs, the best method is to take the digital audio data directly from the CD itself using your CD-ROM drive. Unfortunately, not all CD-ROMs can do this – the feature wasn't included as part of the original standard for CD-ROM drives. But most modern CD-ROM drives are suitable, and the best way to find out is to try. If yours won't work, think about upgrading – you can get a new drive that can read raw CD audio information for less than £50.

But before you start creating MP3 files of your entire record collection, bear in mind that it's illegal to copy music if you don't own the copyright – see the box above on the legal implications of MP3 for more information.

Once you've got all of the software, you can start creating MP3 files. The process of creating files from CD is simple (see our walkthrough).Select the audio track you want to encode and tell the program to create an MP3 file from it. The program reads the raw CD audio data from the CD, saves it to disk as a WAV file and creates an MP3 file from it. You'll need a lot of spare disk space – CD audio files need about 9Mb of space for each minute of sound, and a whole CD could need up to 640Mb.

CDs aren't the only source of sounds for encoding – you can make any sound into an MP3. You could plug a microphone into your soundcard, record yourself singing in the garden (the bath or shower will electrocute you), and create an MP3 to put on your Web site. You can use the Windows Sound Recorder (which comes with all versions of Windows) to record sounds to disk as WAV files – a standard Windows file format – which can then be encoded into MP3 files.

The size of MP3 files also makes them ideal for email attachments, so you could send a greeting from a child to a distant grandparent without using the phone.

Quality vs quantity

MP3 isn't a fixed standard in terms of the amount of compression that's applied – it lets you decide how much you want to compress the files. Several compression modes are built into the software which is used to create MP3 files. The more compression you apply, the smaller your files will become, but they'll also degrade

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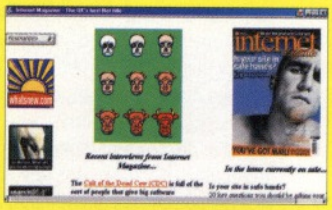

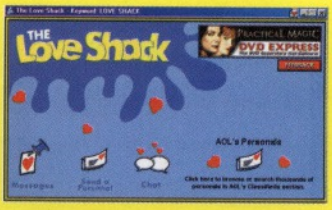

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in quality. The amount of compression is usually measured in terms of the bandwidth required to listen to a file in real-time, so if you want high quality, you might set it to 56kbps in stereo. If you want the smallest possible file, you could set it to 8kbps in mono. The difference in file sizes can be considerable, as the table below shows.

MPEG 3 encoding mode

Type of sound file from CD	Music	Speech
Length (in seconds)	189	53
Size of original file (in Kb)	32,759	9,197
56kbps, stereo MP3 file size (in Kb)	1294	664
Percentage of original file size	3.95	7.22
8kbps, mono MP3 file size (in Kb)	185	95

The table shows that even in 56kbps mode (almost indistinguishable from CD audio), the MP3 files are far smaller than their CD equivalents – you could fit three minutes of music onto a floppy disk as an MP3 file. If quality is vital, some encoders support higher bandwith modes, so you can create larger files that sound as good as your CDs.

But on the Net it's a question of compromise between download time and file quality. A 1.2Mb file might take you a long time to download – a lot longer than a 185k file would, but the quality of the smaller file would be much worse. Once again, experimentation is key – with some audio content (speech, in particular), it still sounds fine when it's heavily compressed. There are also plenty of modes between the two examples we've used, so it's a question of finding the right compromise.

The Web connection

Once you've created your MP3 files, you can put them on your site. You can do this in exactly the same way as you'd add an image to your Web site. Upload the file using an FTP program and create a link on your Web page to point to the file. The HTML to do this is simple:

```
Click <A HREF=www.whatever
.com/MPEG3/mysong.mp3>Here
</A> to download and play my
latest number one hit record!
```

When your visitors click on this link, they'll be given the option to download the file to disk and play it, assuming they have an MP3 player installed. It's usually a good idea to put a link to a site where they can download the player software (such as **www.winamp.com**) to make things easier for them.

Next month we'll be looking at how you can use MP3 and some free software called ShoutCast to put live broadcasts on your site and run your own Internet radio station.

Tracking the tracks

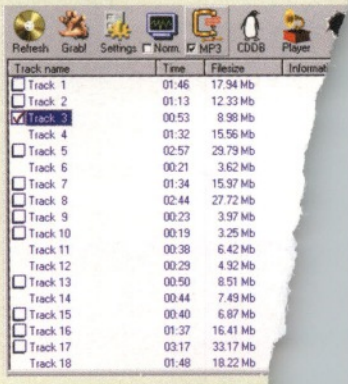
Many of the programs that let you take CDs and create MP3 files support an interesting feature called CDDB. This system links the program to a huge online database of CDs – it searches for the CD you've put in your machine and downloads a list of details, including the name of the record, artist and names of individual tracks.

The program uses this information to name the MP3 file, making it easier to keep track of where your files have come from. For instance, instead of creating a file called Track 7, it could be called Walker, Scott – Winter night. This would make sorting and indexing the MP3 files much easier. More details of CDDB (and a searchable database of CDs) are available from **www.cddb.com**.

CDDB can be used to look up details of your CDs, either through he Web site or directly through the CD player/ripper

Creating an

Step 3

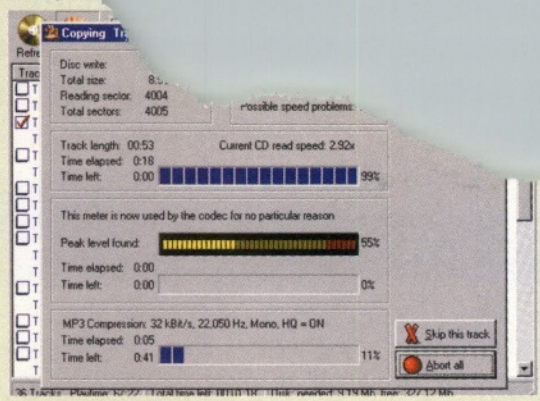


Close the preferences window inside the MP3 button to tell t an MP3 file. Now comes the g getting the data from the disk on the Grab! Button to begin

Step 4

spa it's p

Step 5

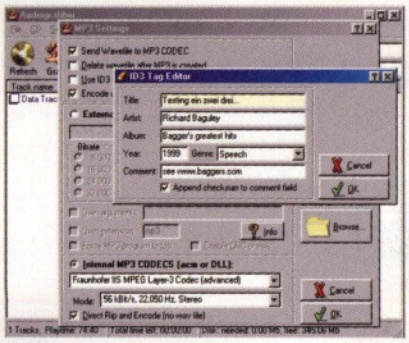


The program takes the data and creates your MP3 file. How long this takes depends on the speed of your machine, but a Pentium running at 233MHz can encode one minute of sound in about 50 seconds – older machines will be significantly slower than this. And once that's done, you're MP3 is ready to play.

The future of MP3

MP3 is a popular music format, but it's not unique. Since MP3 was developed in 1995, there have been a number of new formats developed – many of which give even better compression or better quality. Compression standards, such as AAC (Advanced Audio Compression), can produce files that are 30 of 40 per cent smaller than MP3, but they retain their quality.

These standards aren't as widespread as MP3 though, because they aren't widely supported. You can download the software to create and playback MP3 files (or it might be built into your operating system), but software for the lesser-known standards isn't widely available – yet. It's still not clear which file format will supersede MP3, but it'll eventually be replaced like vinyl has been replaced by CDs.



ID3 tags can be added to MP3 files to identify their origin, but they can be removed

The copyright factor

Once you've put an MP3 file onto your site, there's nothing to stop someone copying it and distributing it themselves. MP3 files can be copied in the same way as normal computer files, so there's nothing to stop someone sending out hundreds of copies of your songs or even putting them onto their own site and not crediting you. There isn't much you can do to stop this happening, but you can put copyright messages into files that at least show where they came from using ID3 Tags.

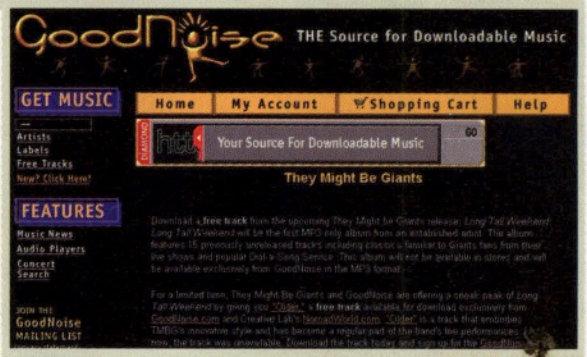
These are embedded into the files, and contain details such as the song title and artist, and can include an email address or URL. This isn't a foolproof method of tracking your files (ID3 tags can be removed without damaging the MP3 file), but it should act as a reminder if someone is thinking of stealing your music. More details of the ID3 tagging system are available from **www.id3.org**.

The best advice is to be careful what you give away. If you're looking to publicise your latest album, give away a couple of tracks and make people buy the CD (or the MP3 file) to hear the whole thing. A person distributing your music isn't necessarily a bad thing – if lots of people have heard your music, you'll sell more copies.

Next month

In the next issue we'll be looking at how you can use MP3 creation and playback to add live broadcasts to your site and even run your own Internet radio station for free! im

Five of the best MP3 sites



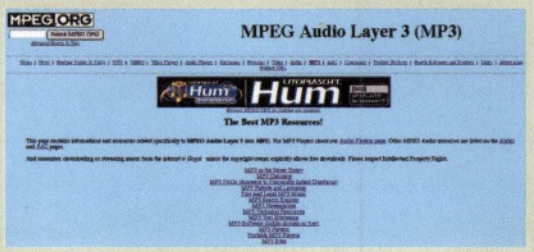
1 MP3.com http://mp3.com
Links to software, tips on creating and listening to MP3 files and hundreds of MP3 songs by aspiring musicians. Highly recommended.

2 GoodNoise www.goodnoise.com
GoodNoise has been very active in promoting and selling music from its bands as MP3s. You can buy and download whole albums for around £5.

3 Unsigned Music www.unsigned-music.com
An excellent site with music by hundreds of unsigned bands from all over the world. All of the tracks can be downloaded for no charge.

4 MPEG.ORG www.mpeg.org/MPEG/mp3.html
Another excellent general site, with loads of information on MP3 and pointers to information on software and hardware. There's also an excellent selection of links to technical information for programmers.

5 IUMA www.iuma.com
The Internet Underground Music Archive claims to represent over 3,500 bands and 30 small record labels – most have MP3 tracks that you can download and play.



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Getting started with advertising

The top sites on the Web earn a lot of money from displaying adverts. Your site might not be in their league yet, but you can still make money, or swap adverts with other sites. Andrew Starling takes you through the options

There's plenty of money to be made from hosting adverts. Estimates for worldwide ad spending on the Web vary from $560 million to $1.9 billion for 1998. But most of this money goes to big sites with millions of visitors a week. There's still a small piece of action for the rest of us, but you'll need at least 5,000 visitors a week to attract advertising companies.

Getting started with advertising can be tricky, and the false prospect of easy money has attracted plenty of con artists to Internet advertising. It's worth being wary, and spending your time promoting your site instead – it'll give you greater clout when it comes to negotiating a deal.

But even if it doesn't make you a fortune, online advertising can still promote your site through banner exchanges. We'll come back to these free exchange systems, but first let's look at selling space on your site.

What's it worth?

The most common type of advert on the Internet is the banner – a horizontal strip across part of the page, usually at the top. Payment for hosting banners comes in many forms. The main three are by time, viewers, and click-throughs.

- **Exposure time**

Book a slot for a set period of time – £2,500 a month for an ad shown on a secondary Yahoo! page, for instance

- **Number of viewers**

Measured in cost per mille (CPM) – cost per thousand viewers. An alternative is cost per eyeball, so a £10 CPM rate is the equivalent of 10p per eyeball

- **Click-throughs**

You'd get a certain amount for each visitor who clicks on the advert on your site and follows the hyperlink through to the advertiser's site

Unless you're running a huge site with millions of visitors a month, you won't get paid for exposure time. The other two options, CPM and click-through payments, are far more common.

As a rule, host sites prefer to receive CPM revenue, and advertisers prefer to make click-through payments, so it comes down to who has the most power. If you've got a small site, you probably won't be offered anything more than click-through payments. A busy site might get click-through plus a low CPM. A large site would look for a decent CPM.

Yahoo! (the biggest host site of all) has made a click-through deal with Proctor and Gamble. This put the Internet advertising industry in a spin, but we've yet to see whether this is a one-off or the beginning of a new trend.

Cost per mille

As you might expect, ad rates are closely related to visitor numbers, but the relationship isn't proportional. If your site only attracts a modest number of visitors, you'll get a much lower CPM than if you're running a popular site. In other words, the rate per thousand visitors is much less for minor sites. This difference is supposed to reflect the higher administrative cost of dealing with small numbers.

If you've got a small site, you won't be retiring early on your ad revenue. If you

If you want to go it alone, it's worth registering on lists of sites available for hosting, such as AdCentral (www.adcentral.com)

One of the best agencies is DoubleClick (www.doubleclick.net). You know you've hit the big time if DoubleClick takes your site on

The case against adverts

Not everybody wants adverts on their site. For starters, it shifts your site's status from non-commercial to commercial, and some visitors might value it less. The British are a cynical bunch, and as soon as we catch a sniff of money-making and commercialism, we tend to lose interest.

Adverts mean more data and slower downloads – at a time when most sites are moving in the opposite direction and designing the slimmest and fastest sites possible.

Good page design can be another casualty. If your page is simple and has almost no graphics, it's suddenly dominated by a graphic you've got no control over, which could destroy your carefully colour co-ordinated pages. Advertisers often specify that their messages must be centralised or appear at the top of the page, which imposes design limitations.

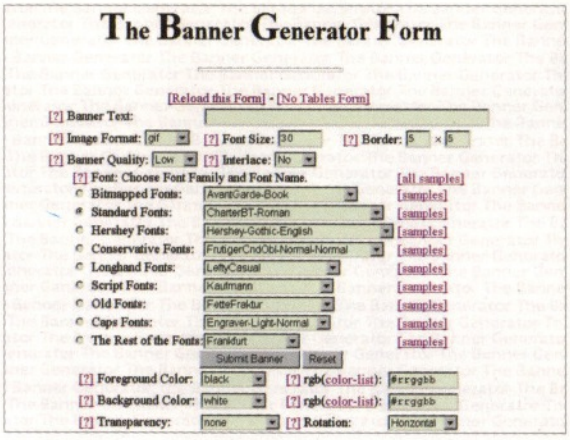
Finally, there's one big problem that's specific to Web site advertising. The hyperlink behind the advert means you're putting something on your site that's designed to take visitors away from it. If you're paid on click-throughs, your financial return will be based on how many people click to leave your site, and that's a peculiar way to get income.

get between 5,000 and 20,000 page hits a month, you'll make between £6 and £30 a month, unless you have a specialised audience. While this won't even cover administration costs, it's worth doing as a pilot exercise so you're ready for bigger things.

Sites getting 50,000 page hits a month can make a worthwhile monthly income of between £120 and £240. The figures vary according to the quality of the audience. A 50,000 a month general audience isn't necessarily valuable. But if your site attracts 50,000 investment brokers, it's worth 10 or even 100 times more.

At the bottom end, CPM can be as low as 15p – but it averages around £4. On more successful sites, CPM rates vary from £5 to £50, with the overall average at around £10. Yahoo! charges between £10 and £36 CPM, Excite £14 to £36, and Infoseek £8 to £36. If you see rates that are higher than these, don't take them too seriously.

Discount rates are widespread – advertisers push host sites for discounts of around 50 per cent. The industry estimates £1.2 billion was spent on online advertising in 1998, but it naturally wants to make it seem successful. A more objective estimate is £300m, with all the hyperbole removed and taking discounting into account.



For help with building your banner, try the banner generator at www.coder.com/creations/banner

Click-through

The click-through rate doesn't refer to money – it's used to describe the percentage of viewers who click through to the advertiser's site. Click-through payments vary from 3p to 21p. Click-through rates are around one per cent of the total visitors to a site, but there's talk of rates of up to eight per cent.

This raises a mathematical riddle. If you try to compare CPM rates with click-through payments, the numbers don't match up. If you had 1,000 visitors with a click-through rate of one per cent, it'd mean you had 10 click-throughs. At a payment of 12p, that's the equivalent of a £1.20 CPM, which is very low.

The industry is well aware of this discrepancy, but one explanation is that click-through payments are for low-end sites, so the rates are lower. From another perspective, CPM rates are artificially high and are bound to decrease with time. The latter theory complies with the general trend of lower CPM advertising rates – advertisers are realising that online advertising isn't as wonderful as they first thought.

If you're expecting to receive payment for click-throughs, you'll also face the problem of abandoned clicks. Sometimes people click on banners by mistake and stop the transfer. It's important to establish the ground rules with your advertiser. Will an abandoned transfer be paid for?

Another possible bone of contention is multiple clicks from a single visitor. Some advertisers will only count the first click-through from any single IP address in a dial-up session. They don't want to pay you twice for two visits from the same person.

Advertising agencies can also reduce the income from your ads. If you get an advert through an advertising agency, it'll take its commission out of the money you get, rather than charging its client (the advertiser).

Agencies

If you're ready to add advertising to your site, where do you start? The main choice is between doing it yourself and putting your site in the hands of an agency.

It's easy enough to do it yourself if you've got a popular site – the first thing to do is register with a few hosting directories. Then you can sit back and wait for the advertisers to contact you.

The downside of doing it yourself is that advertisers will expect you to produce heavy-duty server log statistics. On a small scale, you can manage this manually by extracting the figures from your logs and sending them on. But once you've got more than half a dozen adverts, you'll probably need some level of automation.

Agencies can simplify the process of finding advertisers and deal with all those log stats too, but make sure

The agency view

Real Media is one of the top online advertising agencies in the UK. It sees itself as a genuine intermediary between advertisers, marketers and Web site publishers. Clients include a number of large Web publishers who use the company's high-end software to manage adverts on their pages. We asked Sean Lee of Real Media how the UK advertising market compares to the US.

"The US is a couple of years ahead. The American market was developed a lot earlier, but it's had some credibility problems because there weren't any good management tools at first. It's a difficult market that's been created in the US, with an oversupply problem and huge discounting.

"The European market has been easier to develop because everybody learned from the US experience. Oversupply is less of a problem here, but with a big site launch almost every week, the situation's changing fast. On the cultural side, advertising has to be executed in a way that's attractive to the local market, so US companies have to change how they do things when they come to Europe."

And what about new developments in the industry, including Rich Media?

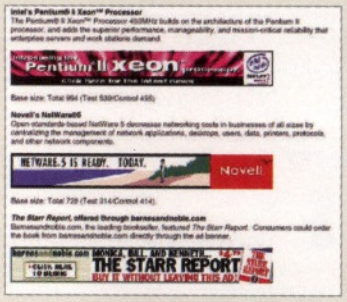
"Advertisers are becoming more adventurous. The traditional top banner still has its place, but it's not the most productive option. Advertisers are experimenting with alternative sizes and new positions on the page.

"We've seen some fantastic results from Rich Media advertising – response rates are up by 300 to 400 per cent. That's good news for advertisers, and the site publishers like it too, because the adverts don't need to take you off the site. But the downside is that, for technical reasons, not many sites can carry them."

Rich Media
The new buzzword

In a bid to attract the attention of jaded viewers, companies have been attempting to inject new life into the boring old banner ad. Rich Media is the next step beyond GIF animation. It incorporates Java, streaming video, Flash and Enliven within an advert to grab your attention.

And a British company is at the forefront of the new technology. AcitveAdvertiser banners from Pentacom Communications (www.pentacom.co.uk) include interactive games, puzzles and crosswords. Pull-down dialog boxes within banners let you buy directly from the advertiser, via the ad, without ever having to transfer to its site. Naturally this is just another gimmick, but a rather neat one.



A study by Wired Digital and Millward Brown Interactive found Rich Media ads work well. Ads from Intel, Novell and Barnesandnoble.com were put to the test. You can see a summary of the results and download the report from http://adres.internet.com/html/new/content/richads.html

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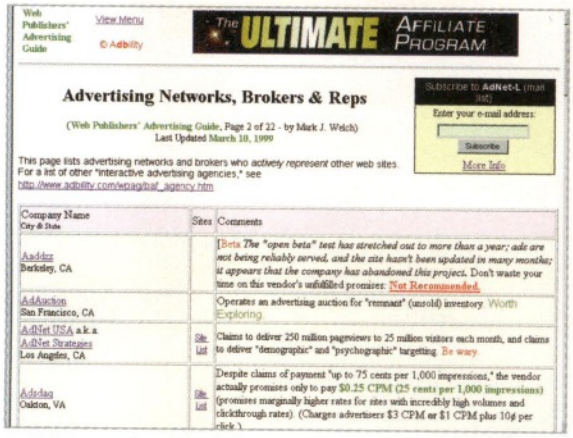
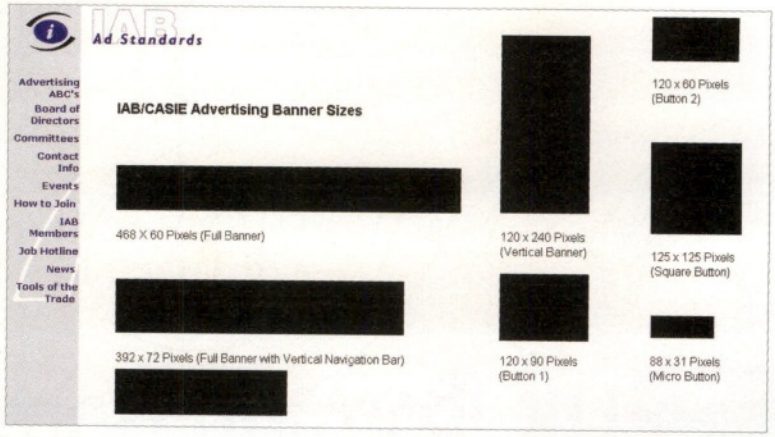


Look before you leap. Check the form of ad agencies (above) at www.Adbility.com /WPAG/ba _network .htm



The Internet Advertising Bureau (www.iab.net) has established guidelines for the size of online advertisements (above right)

Where on the page, and how big?

Most ads appear at the top of a page, but this isn't a fixed rule. A study for Webreference.com showed that adverts in other positions within the top 400 pixels of a page can give better results. The bottom right-hand corner of this section does especially well. Most advertisers say they need to be in the top 400 pixels. If you offer an advertising slot below 400 pixels, you'll get less money.

Banners are usually 468 x 60 pixels. There's an alternative size – 400 x 40, but it's less popular. A button ad is 88 x 31 pixels, but you don't need to start thinking about buttons until you've got at least a dozen banner ads on your site.

Click-through rates above one per cent are rare. But the right advert in the right place can achieve them. These best of breed banners are from www.bannertips.com

you check out an agency thoroughly first. If your want to look up a specific agency, visit the Web Publishers' Advertising Guide at **www.Adbility.com/WPAG/ba _network.htm**. Some of the information here is a little out of date, but it's worrying to see the large number of agencies that get a bad report.

At a higher level, many of the bigger agencies offering CPM arrangements won't take you on unless your site is already busy. Thresholds vary from 5,000 page views a month to one million at the top end. Watch out for the different measures agencies use for their thresholds – page views, impressions or site visits. If your visitors view more than one page, but they don't arrive through your home page, you could get figures like 20,000 impressions a month from 4,000 visitors, including 2,500 visits to your most popular page, and 2,000 to your home page.

Other than banners

When most people think of online advertising, they automatically think of banners, but there are alternatives. One is fully sponsored sites or pages. These account for more than 40 per cent of advertisers' total expenditure and are negotiated on an individual basis.

Other advertising options include interstitial pages and pop-ups. Pop-ups are those little extra browser windows that appear when you visit a site. Interstitials are full advertising pages you get when you think you're clicking through to regular content. You might have to click on a link to pass through the pages. They can also automatically refresh and take you to where you thought you were going in the first place.

Exchange schemes

Compared to commercial advertising, banner exchange schemes are generally simple to deal with. There's also less chance of being ripped off, thanks to the small amounts of money involved.

The idea behind a banner exchange is that your banner is shown on some participating sites, and some of their banners are shown in rotation on yours.

The ratio of the number of displays you give away compared to the number of displays you receive is crucial. A few exchange schemes set the ration at 1:1, meaning they gain nothing at all from providing the service – they're a non-profit organisation.

More commonly, the ratio is set at 2:1, so you have to display two ads on your site to get your advert displayed once on somebody else's. This lets the exchange company add some adverts of its own to the system. These are regular commercial adverts, and that's where the administrators make their money.

Exchange services will usually help you build your own banner ads. They'll give you a few tips and templates, so you can produce something without having to learn a graphics program.

The mechanics of including exchange banners on your site aren't too complicated. You include code on your page that inserts an image pulled from the exchange scheme server rather than your own. Your exchange scheme will keep a record of the number of times your site displays its ads. This record is then used to calculate the number of times your own banner will be displayed on other sites.

Better banners

If you're joining a banner exchange scheme, here are a few tips on how to make a banner irresistible to all those itchy click-through fingers.

1 The words "click here" in the banner text will induce a few simple souls to do exactly that.
2 Animated banners work better than static banners. That's why the big companies use them.
3 A question or a puzzling statement can inspire people to click through to find the answer.
4 Change your banners frequently. The big companies change them every few weeks.
5 Light colours get more attention than dark ones.

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1st	Virtual Internet	581
3rd	Demon	440
7	Netbenefit	274
18	Magic	129
35	Corpex	78
65	RapidSite	20

0 100 200 300 400 500

Source: Zeus Technologies. 2 April 1999.
Survey of 72 firms (not all shown).

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If you intend to put adverts on more than one page, make sure you register each page with the exchange scheme, rather than registering once and repeating the same code throughout your site. If you repeat the code, the advert is put in your visitor's cache memory the first time it appears. On subsequent pages, the cached version will be used, but the exchange server won't be contacted. Your visitor will see the advert several times, but you'll only get credit for a single display.

You can get statistics from you exchange program which show you how often your pages have pulled adverts from the server, how often your own banner was displayed and how many click-throughs your banner has made. It's useful to compare these statistics with your own server logs or page counters. Counting visitors is an inexact science, and it's useful to have an extra source of information, especially if your site's on a free server.

You can also get some level of targeting, so you can make sure your advert appears on the right kind of sites and only suitable adverts appear on your own pages.

You never know – you could make a brilliant banner, get lots more visitors to your site, and get that magic email from an advertiser that turns your site from a hobby into a nice little earner. im

Resources

Big agencies

AdSmart	www.adsmart.net
Burst! Media	www.burstmedia.com
Flycast	www.flycast.com
Real Media	www.realmedia.com
DoubleClick	www.doubleclick.net

Agencies for smaller sites

adbot.com	www.adbot.com
eAds	www.eads.com

Advertising registries

(These list sites that are looking for advertising)

AdCentral	www.adcentral.com
ClickTrade	www.clicktrade.com

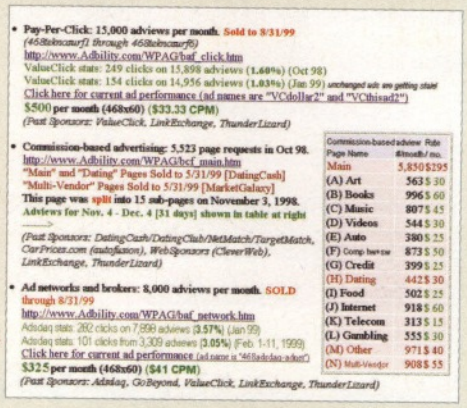
Lists of worldwide banner exchanges

Banner Exchange Programs
http://urwel.com/webweavers/banlinks.htm

Adbility
www.adbility.com/WPAG/ba_exchange.asp

UK-based banner exchanges

UK Banners	www.ukbanners.com
InterLink UK	www.interlinkuk.com
Impressionz	www.impressionz.com
Partypeople.co.uk	www.partypeople.co.uk/bannerex
LogicLink Banner Exchange	www.logiclink.nl/uk



- **Pay-Per-Click: 15,000 adviews per month.** Sold to 8/31/99
  (46Steknosurf1 through 46Steknosurf6)
  http://www.Adbility.com/WPAG/baf_click.htm
  ValueClick stats: 249 clicks on 15,898 adviews (1.60%) (Oct 98)
  ValueClick stats: 154 clicks on 14,956 adviews (1.03%) (Jan 99) *unchanged ads are getting stale!*
  Click here for current ad performance (ad names are "VCdollar2" and "VCthisad2")
  $500 per month (468x60) ($33.33 CPM)
  (Past Sponsors: ValueClick, LinkExchange, ThunderLizard)
- **Commission-based advertising: 5,523 page requests in Oct 98.**
  http://www.Adbility.com/WPAG/bcf_main.htm
  "Main" and "Dating" Pages Sold to 5/31/99 [DatingCash]
  "Multi-Vendor" Pages Sold to 5/31/99 [MarketGalaxy]
  This page was split into 15 sub-pages on November 3, 1998.
  Adviews for Nov. 4 - Dec. 4 [31 days] shown in table at right
  ——>
  (Past Sponsors: DatingCash/DatingClub/NetMatch/TargetMatch, CarPrices.com (autofusion), WebSponsors (CleverWeb), LinkExchange, ThunderLizard)
- **Ad networks and brokers: 8,000 adviews per month.** SOLD through 8/31/99
  http://www.Adbility.com/WPAG/baf_network.htm
  Adsdaq stats: 262 clicks on 7,898 adviews (3.57%) (Jan 99)
  Adsdaq stats: 101 clicks from 3,309 adviews (3.05%) (Feb. 1-11, 1999)
  Click here for current ad performance (ad name is "46Radsdaq-adsn")
  $325 per month (468x60) ($41 CPM)
  (Past Sponsors: Adsdaq, GoBeyond, ValueClick, LinkExchange, ThunderLizard)

Commission-based adview Page Name	Rate $/month/ mo.
Main	5,850 $295
(A) Art	563 $ 30
(B) Books	996 $ 60
(C) Music	807 $ 45
(D) Videos	544 $ 30
(E) Auto	380 $ 25
(F) Comp hw sw	873 $ 50
(G) Credit	399 $ 25
(H) Dating	442 $ 30
(I) Food	502 $ 25
(J) Internet	918 $ 60
(K) Telecom	313 $ 15
(L) Gambling	555 $ 30
(M) Other	971 $ 40
(N) Multi-Vendor	908 $ 55

You'll find a few sites publish their ad rates on the Web, but most will only send you prices by email

Online advertising market research

Forrester Research	www.forrester.com
Jupiter Communications	www.jup.com
Internet Advertising Bureau	www.iab.net
The Aberdeen Group	www.aberdeen.com
GartnerGroup	www.gartnerweb.com

Advert management software

Central Ad	www.centralad.com
WebMeister Banner Ad System	www.counsel.net/banner
Banner Ad Server Software (A list of links)	www.markwelch.com/bannerad/baf_ad_sw.htm
Red Eye International	www.redeye.com
Engage Technologies	www.accipiter.com

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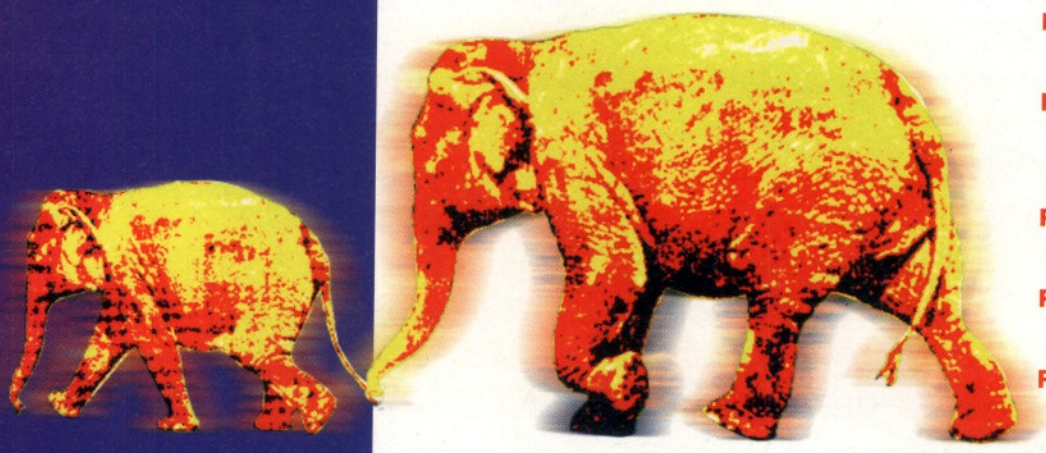

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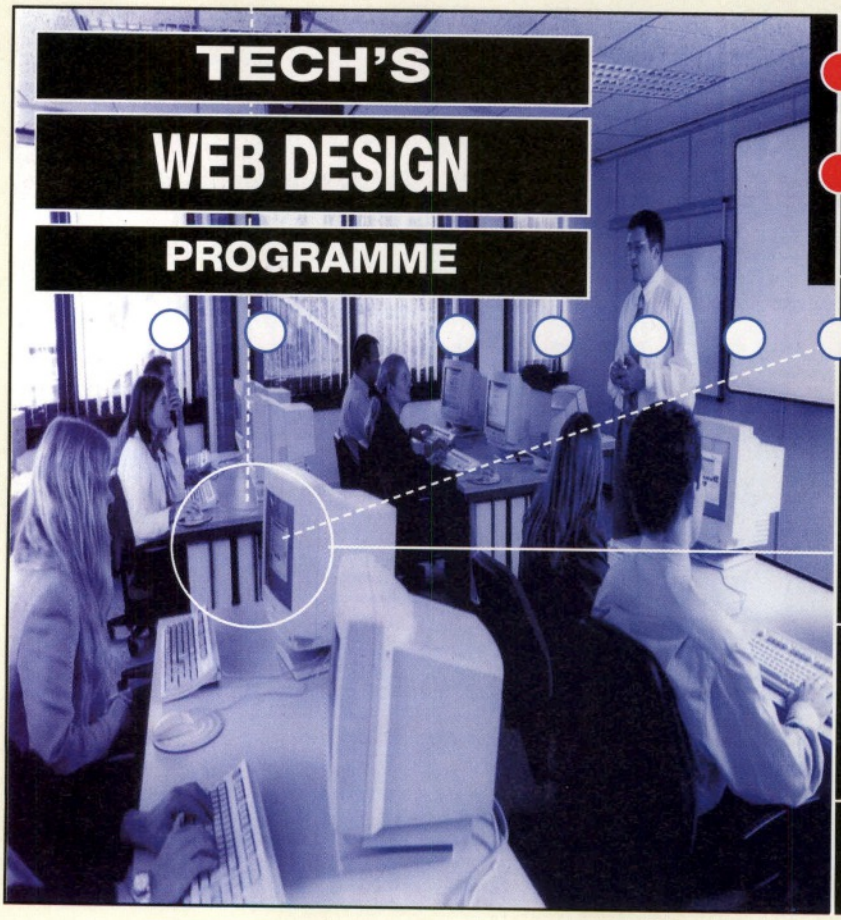

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The *Internet Magazine* ISP Lab tests put UK's top service providers through a rigorous set of performance tests. Find out how your provider scored in our exclusive tests. Turn to page 140 to find out which ISP wins our award for most consistent performance over the last six months

The winner

This month's top ISP is Interactive Web, which has risen from 68th place last month. CIX comes a close second – this provider often features in the upper part of the table and, thanks to its consistency, it does well in our six-month tests. AIC-Entanet, which last month got pulled down close to last position due to bad US figures, bounces back to third position.

Technocom deserves a mention for climbing up 46 places from 63rd to 17th. Intonet also manages a big jump from 90th to 24th place. Both Cable & Wireless Internet and Cable & Wireless Internet Lite have improved – the regular version has moved from 100th to 40th place, and the Lite version has risen from 104th to 37th place.

BT ClickFree has moved in the opposite direction, dropping from its impressive 3rd position last month to 92nd – it was let down by poor US connection speeds.

Virgin Net has improved its US performance but has been let down by its availability, so it remains virtually unchanged in 81st place.

Freeserve hasn't done well either, dropping 45 places to 77th position this month.

ISP OF THE MONTH

INTERACTIVE WEB

Number changes

Last month we mentioned that ISPs often change their dial-in numbers as part of their performance improvements. These changes occasionally go unnoticed by subscribers who continue to use the old dial-in numbers. The service gets progressively worse as the ISP moves its modems over to the new number and leaves the old number with a few skeleton resources.

This month we took Demon out of the results table because the dial-in number we were using was out of date. Its poor result last month was caused by the same problem.

Reflecting ISP changes

The ISP situation in the UK has changed a great deal over the past few months, thanks to the popularity of the new free ISPs and the introduction of 0800 numbers for off-peak Internet access. We're in the process of adapting our tests in response to this and you might notice some changes in the provider labs section. We've already changed some of the sites we test, for instance – particularly in the US.

Our averages

Our testing machines hold a list of ISPs. The system selects four Web sites and tests the download speed of each ISP. When it reaches the bottom of the list, it picks four more sites and starts at the top again.

Over the space of a few weeks, we make lots of connections to each ISP and pay plenty of visits to our selected sites, giving us a wealth of data to produce the results. We calculate an average download time for each of the Web pages and from these figures we produce regional averages for each ISP.

The UK, European and US site averages are used to produce an overall average Web download time. This figure is combined with the availability statistics to produce the final rankings.

The majority of Web traffic is still between sites in the US, so we give each of the regional averages a weighting – US sites get 60 per cent, UK sites 30 per cent and European sites 10 per cent. These percentages are based on research by several ISPs – they all found that the majority of the sites visited by their customers were in the US.

Peering partners

The quality of an ISP's service when connecting to a foreign site is determined by the partnerships it has with data carriers in other countries – a peering arrangement.

It's similar to sending a letter to the US – your mail is handled by the postal services of both countries who work together to deliver your mail. A peering arrangement between ISPs accomplishes the same thing when you access a US Web site from the UK.

Uppers & downers

▲ AIC-ENTANET
Up 98 places to 3rd place
A big rise from 101st place last month thanks to improvements in US site download times

▲ INTERACTIVE WEB
Up 67 places to 1st place
The second biggest jump in the tests this month thanks to its improved connection speed

▼ BT CLICKFREE
Down 89 places to 92nd place
A disastrous month – after last month's 3rd position – was due to a poor US throughput figure

▼ WORLDWIDE WEB SERVICES
Down 81 places to 87th place
A big fall from 6th position last month was due to problems with US site downloads

The only ISP tests that count

The *Internet Magazine* ISP tests are based on proven scientific testing principles. We make sure we connect to each ISP many times – which means we make thousands of calls.

The results produced by this extensive testing are then processed, resulting in the test analysis and ranking figures you see in these pages. At every stage, the results are checked to make sure they are accurate.

Please remember that these tests are only designed to examine the availability and speed of an ISP – we don't test their prices or technical support. For the lowdown on the complete set of services provided by the top 30 ISPs, get hold of our gigantic ISP of the Year feature from our Faxback service on page 123.

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b tests

This month's best-performing ISPs, as tested in *Internet Magazine*'s labs

This Month	Last Month	ISP Name	Telephone	Availability	Overall average Web speed (seconds)	Average (seconds) UK Web sites	Average (seconds) US Web sites	Average (seconds) European sites
1	68	Interactive Web	(01926) 450 099	97.35%	10.96	9.48	11.40	12.07
2	26	CIX	(0181) 255 5151	98.15%	11.20	9.69	11.94	11.65
3	101	AIC-Entanet	(01279) 306677	98.23%	11.37	9.79	12.11	11.86
4	25	Ace Internet	(0705) 066 7423	99.06%	11.51	9.38	12.38	12.55
5	5	Mistral Internet	(0800) 328 7253	99.08%	11.61	9.47	12.72	12.05
6	14	Gemsoft	(0114) 275 7070	100.00%	11.64	10.50	12.21	11.90
7	2	Datanet	(01252) 810 081	98.21%	11.79	10.23	12.42	12.56
8	44	UniNet Internet Services	(0800) 783 7499	100.00%	11.92	9.64	13.04	12.57
9	39	Primex	(01908) 643 597	95.54%	12.03	9.11	13.92	11.67
10	22	Nildram	(0800) 496 2903	95.58%	12.07	9.33	13.65	12.22
11	12	Pavilion Internet	(01273) 607 072	100.00%	12.35	10.06	12.92	14.35
12	21	Internet UK	(0845) 070 0006	100.00%	12.37	10.20	13.67	12.36
13	35	Pinnacle Internet	(01903) 524 999	100.00%	12.39	10.02	13.17	14.01
14	7	Global Internet	(0870) 909 8041	100.00%	12.41	9.47	13.13	15.04
15	1	ENTANET	(0500) 368 263	98.21%	12.44	9.69	14.33	11.82
16	36	CompuServe	(0990) 000 200	100.00%	12.47	9.83	14.30	11.86
17	63	Technocom	(01753) 714 200	88.43%	12.52	9.56	14.85	11.16
18	13	inweb	(0845) 606 2014	100.00%	12.74	9.59	15.16	11.40
19	66	NewNet	(07000) 639 638	94.64%	12.75	10.30	14.30	12.56
20	50	U-Net	(01925) 484 444	100.00%	12.76	9.25	15.32	11.61
21	18	UK Online	(01749) 333 333	98.21%	12.77	9.96	14.64	12.34
22	31	London Web Communications	(0800) 026 8306	97.37%	12.79	10.40	13.63	14.25
23	70	ConnectFREE	(0702) 115 2525	82.68%	12.79	11.31	13.86	12.35
24	90	Intonet	(0181) 941 9195	100.00%	12.83	9.78	14.98	12.01
25	47	Onyx Internet	(0345) 715 715	93.86%	12.86	10.90	13.62	13.91
26	73	UUNet (Pipex Dial)	(0500) 567 000	100.00%	12.93	9.49	14.35	14.51
27	4	REDNET	(01494) 513 333	100.00%	12.93	9.28	15.53	11.89
28	28	Internet for Business	(01224) 333 370	100.00%	13.13	10.32	13.42	16.62
29	80	Newgate communications	(0121) 327 6633	65.81%	13.19	10.13	14.92	13.43
30	17	ClaraNet	(0800) 358 2828	94.87%	13.21	10.61	15.24	12.03
31	29	Mitsubishi	(0800) 226 600	99.08%	13.23	11.16	15.19	11.45
32	87	Cheapnet	(0990) 168 160	100.00%	13.28	10.29	15.64	11.84
33	54	Netkonect	(0171) 345 7777	95.45%	13.29	9.52	16.12	11.84
34	97	UK2Net	(0171) 538 0253	96.49%	13.30	10.29	15.00	13.56
35	83	SoftProg NET	(0181) 788 0656	100.00%	13.40	10.75	14.52	14.56
36	30	Prestel Online	(0990) 223 300	97.22%	13.40	10.19	12.56	20.31
37	104	Cable & Wireless Internet Lite	(0800) 092 3001	89.43%	13.49	13.12	13.59	13.80
38	61	Frontier Internet Services	(0171) 536 9090	99.08%	13.50	9.97	15.16	14.65
39	77	HiWay	(01635) 573 300	95.58%	13.59	11.77	15.06	12.64
40	100	Cable & Wireless Internet	(0800) 092 3013	96.49%	13.62	10.48	15.48	13.66
41	N/A	Easynet	(0171) 681 4444	97.35%	13.64	10.56	14.88	15.16
42	37	Paradise Internet	(01256) 414 863	100.00%	13.68	10.09	14.71	16.50
43	107	Surflink	(0181) 903 2777	100.00%	13.68	10.09	14.71	16.50
44	56	TIA NET	(0800) 092 6070	84.75%	13.69	11.57	15.39	12.61
45	16	NetDirect Internet	(0800) 731 3311	97.27%	13.79	10.96	15.37	14.09
46	9	Freedom To Surf	(0181) 881 2111	99.08%	13.89	12.39	15.23	12.78
47	20	Cerbernet	(0171) 360 8000	95.61%	13.94	11.51	15.66	13.26
48	53	Cygnet Internet Services	(0181) 880 4650	90.36%	13.95	10.86	15.20	15.44
49	34	CommUnity Internet	(01865) 856 000	97.27%	13.95	10.47	16.65	12.44

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This month's best-performing ISPs, as tested in *Internet Magazine*'s labs

This Month	Last Month	ISP Name	Telephone	Availability	Overall average Web speed (seconds)	Average (seconds) UK Web sites	Average (seconds) US Web sites	Average (seconds) European sites
50	99	Direct Net @ccess	(01232) 201 555	98.18%	13.96	11.62	14.95	14.99
51	105	Eclipse Networking	(01392) 202 345	97.30%	14.16	10.47	16.52	13.80
52	41	Total connectivity Providers	(01703) 571 300	100.00%	14.19	9.65	17.03	13.92
53	38	Direct Connection	(0800) 072 0000	97.37%	14.19	9.65	17.03	13.92
54	51	Gifford Internet Services	(0117) 939 7722	94.74%	14.21	10.39	17.46	11.83
55	72	Portland communications	(0181) 942 1115	100.00%	14.26	10.50	16.42	14.51
56	79	Force 9	(0800) 073 7800	79.41%	14.34	11.90	16.31	13.06
57	8	Inter@lpha	(01703) 363 200	100.00%	14.41	10.41	17.15	13.56
58	52	Legend Internet	(01274) 743 500	87.29%	14.44	10.64	16.98	13.79
59	45	Abel Internet	(0131) 445 5555	96.36%	14.45	11.22	17.19	12.42
60	46	Internet Central	(01270) 611 000	100.00%	14.45	10.76	17.10	13.37
61	59	CYBERphile Internet	(01543) 454 840	100.00%	14.68	13.85	14.57	16.22
62	10	FreeDotNet	(0181) 938 3338	99.11%	14.69	9.54	19.04	11.51
63	69	Aviators Network	(0700) 284 2867	94.83%	14.72	9.94	16.98	16.22
64	19	Sonnet Internet	(0171) 891 2000	97.27%	14.80	9.79	17.47	15.66
65	103	Free-Online	(0870) 706 0504	80.00%	14.88	10.48	18.26	13.06
66	15	CableNet	(01424) 830 900	99.11%	14.93	10.36	16.88	16.91
67	23	LineOne	(0345) 777 464	100.00%	15.13	12.40	15.98	17.10
68	55	ProWeb	(0500) 636 343	99.11%	15.17	14.05	15.96	14.86
69	106	Which? Online	(0645) 830 240	98.23%	15.64	16.14	16.28	13.29
70	60	EntWeb	(0800) 525 470	81.10%	15.94	11.42	20.07	12.40
71	88	Ideal Internet services	(01942) 522 333	96.43%	16.26	11.07	20.53	13.35
72	96	Internet Alliance eXchange	(0800) 052 0523	94.74%	16.35	13.57	14.70	24.63
73	71	Netcom Internet	(0800) 980 9107	99.11%	16.45	10.93	18.23	20.28
74	62	Cable Internet	(0500) 500 100	89.92%	16.47	10.29	20.54	15.59
75	43	Internet Discovery	(01203) 364 400	94.74%	16.66	13.51	18.49	16.82
76	49	Enterprise	(01624) 677 666	100.00%	16.66	13.51	18.49	16.82
77	32	Freeserve	(0990) 500 049	96.43%	16.94	11.78	21.35	13.66
78	75	DNA Internet Services	(01604) 670 717	95.65%	17.00	10.74	22.18	13.45
79	64	Newbury Internet	(01635) 569 123	99.11%	17.21	11.82	21.85	13.71
80	42	BT Internet	(0800) 800 001	98.18%	17.25	11.12	21.85	14.95
81	82	Virgin Net	(0500) 558 800	95.69%	17.28	9.62	23.47	13.30
82	86	PowerNet	(01908) 605 188	93.10%	17.31	13.24	21.28	13.47
83	27	SAQ Internet	(0870) 737 7700	99.07%	17.36	11.72	19.63	20.11
84	89	ICM Netserv	(0800) 614 581	100.00%	17.42	13.88	19.72	16.97
85	24	Telinco Internet Services	(0800) 542 0800	74.47%	17.45	11.12	21.17	17.64
86	40	Vossnet	(01753) 737 800	100.00%	17.83	9.91	24.25	13.64
87	6	WorldWide Web Services	(01784) 898 800	100.00%	18.19	10.12	25.38	12.33
88	65	WSS Internet Access	(01793) 420 764	99.11%	18.50	15.84	19.71	19.48
89	81	Moonlight Internet Services	(01276) 856 868	96.52%	19.11	10.67	26.21	14.05
90	85	The Internet Business	(01232) 424 190	85.27%	19.14	13.25	23.96	15.94
91	95	Baynet	(01222) 256 401	100.00%	19.31	18.65	20.84	16.49
92	3	BT ClickFree	(0800) 731 7887	100.00%	19.41	12.75	25.93	13.13
93	84	Success In Motion	N/A	73.72%	19.53	10.97	24.37	20.26
94	58	Computalynx	(01604) 231 437	98.18%	20.29	12.00	28.18	13.03
95	33	Intensive Networks	(01672) 511 054	100.00%	20.29	12.00	28.18	13.03
96	78	I-Way	(0171) 734 5734	95.54%	21.71	18.34	22.18	25.58
97	67	Zoo Internet	(0181) 961 7000	97.35%	23.29	15.82	29.22	19.64
98	93	DIALNet	(0800) 881 881	100.00%	24.70	12.85	34.42	18.17
99	74	Wave Rider Internet	(0121) 603 3888	93.10%	27.60	19.06	29.56	35.50

How the performance tests work

The Internet Magazine provider lab tests are designed to give you all the information you need on the speed and availability of Internet Service Providers. Every month, our testing system accesses each of the ISPs on the list many times. Our system repeatedly checks:

- The availability of the ISP. How easy is it to make the connection? How often are all the ISP's modems engaged? If the telecommunications company handling the ISP's incoming calls gets too busy, this reduces the ISP's availability figure in just the same way as engaged modems.
- The speed of the connection. How long do a number of popular web pages take to download?

We're now testing access speeds to popular web pages in the UK, US and Europe. The overall average web speed printed in the table is a weighted average, since most of us are more interested in fast loading for UK and US sites, and less bothered about loading foreign language pages from our cousins in the rest of Europe. If Europe is of special interest to you, ignore the overall average and concentrate on the last column.

To rank the ISPs, we calculate the geometric mean of the availability and average web performance. A geometric mean gives equal weight to these two figures.

- This month's tests ran over the period 4-20 May 1999.

How the ISPs performed over the past six months

Find out how your service provider has done in our unique chart...

	Provider	Phone	URL		Provider	Phone	URL
1	REDNET	(01494) 513 333	www.red.net	40	BT Internet	(0800) 800 001	www.btinternet.com
2	UniNet Internet Services	(0800) 783 7499	www.uninet.co.uk	41	Aviators Network	(0700) 284 2867	www.aviators.net
3	CIX	(0181) 255 5151	www.cix.co.uk	42	Ideal Internet Services	(01942) 522 333	www.idealnet.co.uk
4	CompuServe	(0990) 000 200	www.compuserve.co.uk	43	UK Online	(01749) 333 333	www.ukonline.co.uk
5	Pinnacle Internet	(01903) 524 999	www.pncl.co.uk	44	SoftProg NET	(0181) 788 0656	www.softprog.net
6	Global Internet	(0870) 909 8041	www.global.net.uk	45	Legend Internet	(01274) 743 500	www.legend.co.uk
7	Nildram	(0800) 496 2903	www.nildram.net	46	Netcom Internet	(0800) 980 9107	www.netcom.net.uk
8	Mistral Internet	(0800) 328 7253	www.mistral-uk.net	47	Netkonect	(0171) 345 7777	www.netkonect.co.uk
9	Primex	(01908) 643 597	www.primex.co.uk	48	VossNet	(01753) 737 800	www.vossnet.co.uk
10	Total Connectivity Providers	(01703) 571 300	www.tcp.co.uk	49	Inter@lpha	(01703) 363 200	www.interalpha.net
11	Direct Connection	(0800) 072 0000	www.dircon.net	50	Abel Internet	(0131) 445 5555	www.abel.net.uk
12	Freedom to Surf	(0181) 881 2111	www.freedom2surf.net	51	ProWeb	(0500) 636 343	www.proweb.co.uk
13	UUNET (Pipex Dial)	(0500) 567 000	www.uk.uu.net	52	Cygnet Internet Services	(0181) 880 4650	www.cygnet.co.uk
14	NetDirect Internet	(0800) 731 3311	www.netdirect.net.uk	53	LineOne	(0345) 777 464	www.LineOne.net
15	ClaraNET	(0800) 358 2828	www.clara.net	54	WSS Internet Access	(01793) 420 764	www.WSkiSoft.co.uk
16	Gifford Internet Services	(0117) 939 7722	www.gifford.co.uk	55	DNA Internet Services	(01604) 670 717	www.dna-is.com
17	Pavilion Internet	(01273) 607 072	www.pavilion.co.uk	56	Enterprise	(01624) 677 666	www.enterprise.net
18	Technocom	(01753) 714 200	www.technocom.net	57	Hiway	(01635) 573 300	www.hiway.co.uk
19	Sonnet Internet	(0171) 891 2000	www.sonnet.co.uk	58	Computalynx	(01604) 231 437	www.computalynx.co.uk
20	FreeDotNet	(0181) 938 3338	www.thefree.net	59	Datanet	(01252) 810 081	www.data.net.uk
21	Prestel Online	(0990) 223 300	www.prestel.co.uk	60	I-Way	(0171) 734 5734	www.i-way.co.uk
22	Portland Communications	(0181) 942 1115	www.portland.co.uk	61	Tia Net	(0800) 092 6070	www.tianet.com
23	Frontier Internet Services	(0171) 536 9090	www.ftech.co.uk	62	Newbury Internet	(01635) 569 123	www.newbury.net
24	London Web Communications	(0800) 026 8306	www.londonweb.net	63	Intensive Networks	(01672) 511 054	www.intensive.net
25	InterNet for Business	(01224) 333 370	www.ifb.net	64	DIALnet	(0800) 881 881	www.dialnet.com
26	U-Net	(01925) 484 444	www.u-net.net	65	Cable & Wireless Internet	(0800) 092 3013	www.cwcom.net
27	Onyx Internet	(0345) 715 715	www.onyxnet.co.uk	66	Worldwide Web Services	(01784) 898 800	www.webs.co.uk
28	Interactive Web	(01926) 450 099	www.wwwuk.net	67	Cerbernet	(0171) 360 8000	www.cerbernet.net
29	CommUnity Internet	(01865) 856 000	www.community.net.uk	68	The Internet Business	(01232) 424 190	www.tibus.net
30	Cable Internet	(0500) 500 100	www.cableinet.co.uk	69	Internet Alliance Exchange	(0800) 052 0523	www.iax.net
31	Internet Central	(01270) 611 000	www.netcentral.co.uk	70	Zoo Internet	(0181) 961 7000	www.zoo.co.uk
32	Inweb	(0845) 606 2014	www.inweb.net.uk	71	UK2NET	(0171) 538 0253	www.uk2net.com
33	CYBERphile Internet	(01543) 454 840	www.cyberphile.co.uk	72	Telinco Internet Services	(0800) 542 0800	www.telinco.net
34	Gemsoft	(0114) 275 7070	www.gemsoft.net	73	EntWeb	(0800) 525 470	www.entweb.co.uk
35	SAQ Internet	(0870) 737 7700	www.saqnet.co.uk	74	Newgate Communications	(0121) 327 6633	www.newgate.co.uk
36	NewNet	(07000) 639 638	www.newnet.co.uk/home	75	Baynet	(01222) 256 401	www.baynet.co.uk
37	Intonet	(0181) 941 9195	www.intonet.co.uk	76	Virgin Net	(0500) 558 800	www.virgin.net
38	CableNet	(01424) 830 900	www.cablenet.net	77	Which? Online	(0645) 830 240	www.which.net
39	Moonlight Internet Services	(01276) 856 868	www.moon-light.co.uk	78	Surflink	(0181) 903 2777	www.surflink.co.uk

Top performers in the past six months

As well as our normal tests, every month we produce a table showing how the ISPs have performed over the last six months. This is created by averaging the monthly results for availability and Web access speed. The table only includes ISPs that have figured in our monthly tables in every one of the past six months. Some providers aren't included because we only began testing them recently. Others haven't made it because we had problems testing them in at least one of these months. Exclusion from this table means that the ISP wasn't tested for six consecutive months – it's no reflection on the quality of the ISP's service.

Remember, these tests aren't calculated by the ISP's position in the monthly tables, but on the availability and Web speed data collected from six months of testing.

The results

This month, 78 providers have qualified for our six-month tests, with REDNET moving up one place to take over the top spot from UniNet.

The regular ISP tests show them the other way round this month, with UniNet in 8th position and REDNET in 27th place. But the deciding factor in the six-month tests is the rolling averages. The results for January 1999 were removed from the averages this month – which was a good period for UniNet, but a mediocre one for REDNET. The loss of the January figures has had a greater impact than the July results, where their positions are close.

The rolling averages also account for the fact that Interactive Web dropped from 22nd to 28th place, despite being July's number one ISP.

Elsewhere in the results table, Global Internet is still having a good run, moving up from last month's 12th to 6th place.

UUNet has jumped from 31st to 13th place this month, and U-Net has risen up the table from 48th to 26th place.

Direct Connection moves in the opposite direction from 6th to 11th place. Technocom has also suffered, dropping from 8th to 18th place.

Surflink is still languishing at the bottom of the table, with Which? Online in close attendance. One of the few escapees from the bottom order is Enterprise, which has climbed from 72nd position to 56th place this month.

If you're looking for consistency from your service provider, the six-month results are the ones to watch.

Finally your own dedicated web-server is affordable:

Fingertip Control.

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- Install the applications you need: Oracle, ASPs, Custom applications or even your own email and DNS servers.

Fastest Network.

Rank	Company	Average Transfer Rate, KB/s
1st	Virtual Internet	581
3rd	Demon	440
7	Netbenefit	274
35	Corpex	78
65	RapidSite	20

0 100 200 300 400 500

Source: Zeus Technologies. 2 April 1999.
Survey of 72 firms (not all shown).

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Questions?

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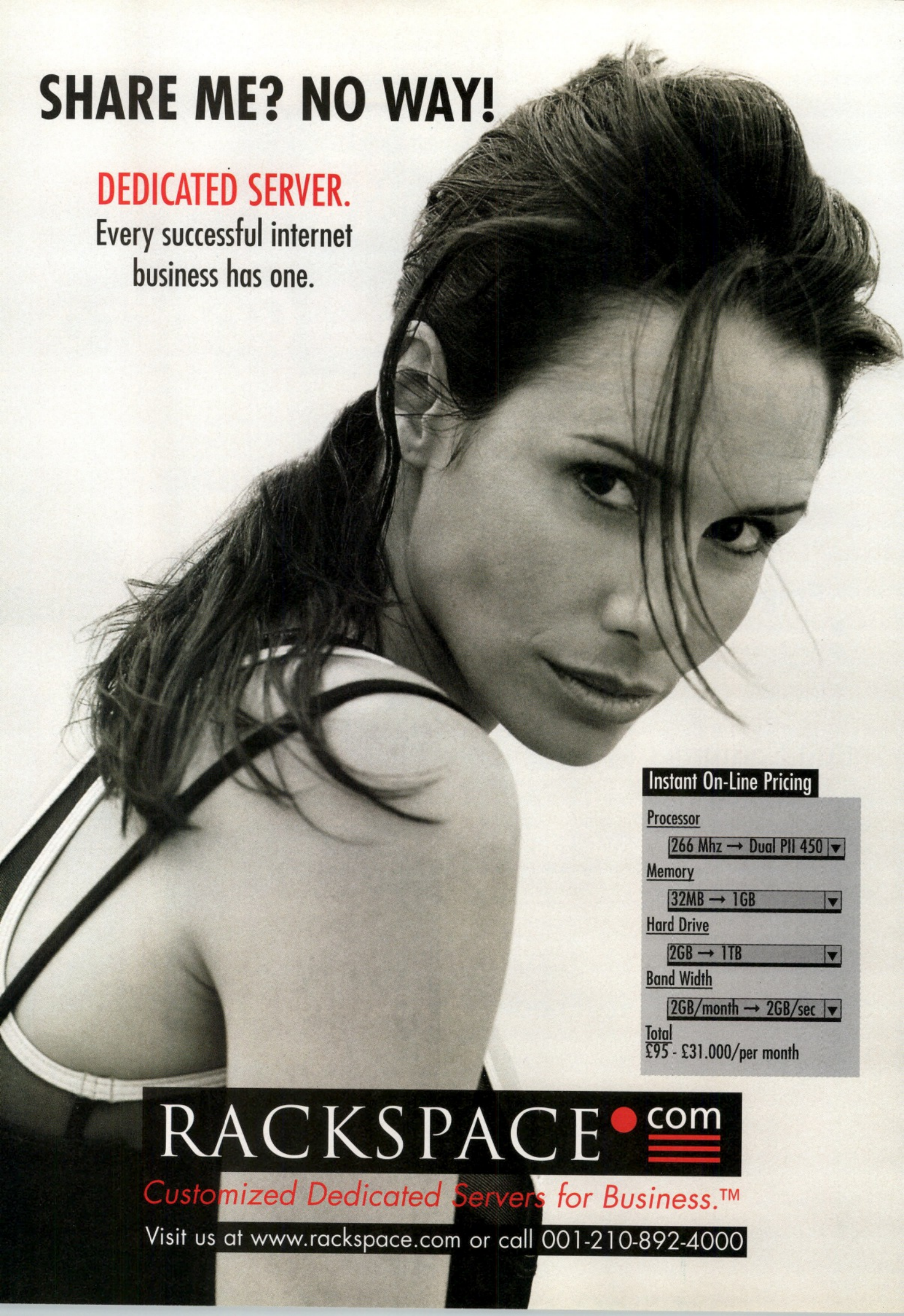
Prices exclude VAT (where applicable) and are based on annual contracts. Speed trials were based on Independent testing of 72 UK hosting companies by Zeus Technologies in April 1999. Standard Nominet Fee is £80 for two years. All trademarks acknowledged. E.&O.E.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This month's best performing hosting companies

This Month	ISP Name	ISP URL	UK Web throughput (Kb per second)	Availability
1	Virtual Internet	www.vi.net	423.74	99.98
2	Paradise Internet Network Services	www.pins.co.uk	368.41	99.87
3	Demon Internet	www.demon.net	355.93	99.54
4	GX Networks	www.gxn.net	345.33	99.91
5	easynet	www.easynet.co.uk	330.51	99.41
6	Netcom UK	www.netcom.net.uk	289.25	99.91
7	Nildram	www.nildram.net	286.57	99.93
8	NewNet	www.newnet.co.uk/home	265.52	99.13
9	WebWorlds	www.webworlds.co.uk	234.93	99.93
10	U-NET	www.u-net.net	222.11	98.44
11	NetBenefit	www.netbenefit.co.uk	210.94	99.76
12	Magic Moments	www.directdomains.com	207.14	99.98
13	Direct Connection	www.dircon.net	179.77	99.96
14	K-web Internet	www.k-web.co.uk	178.85	97.48
15	Technocom PLC	www.technocom.net	169.96	99.91
16	UUNET UK	www.uk.uu.net	142.85	99.13
17	Internet Network Services	www.insnet.net	135.64	99.93
18	BT WebWorld	www.btwebworld.co.uk	134.45	99.54
19	ClaraNet Ltd	www.clara.net	133.6	99.83
20	Worldwide Web Services	www.webs.co.uk	117.61	98.02
21	Net Direct	www.netdirect.net.uk	107.05	99.87
22	VBCnet	www.vbc.net	103.67	99.8
23	Total Web Solutions	www.totalweb.co.uk	98.41	99.28
24	Netcentric Solutions Ltd	www.netcentric.co.uk	94.39	98.56
25	IFB	www.ifb.net	90.2	99.91
26	Cocoon Internet Services	www.cocoon.co.uk	85.31	99.91
27	Pavilion Internet	www.pavilion.co.uk	82.29	99.93
28	Telinco	www.telinco.net	78.48	94.8
29	London Web	www.londonweb.co.uk	77.87	99.72
30	Prestel On-line	www.prestel.co.uk	77.86	98.56
31	Hiway	www.hiway.co.uk	73.57	99.8
32	Frontier Internet Services	www.ftech.co.uk	72.94	99.44
33	Cerbernet Ltd	www.cerbernet.net	72.36	99.09
34	Research Machines	www.rmplc.co.uk	69.3	98.87
35	Scotland Online	www.scotland.net	69.14	98.8
36	.netkonect	www.netkonect.co.uk	68.47	99.20
37	Oxford CommUnity Internet	www.community.net.uk	64.04	99.74
38	Cygnet Internet Solutions	www.cygnet.co.uk	63.77	99.96
39	East Midlands Network (EMNET)	www.emnet.co.uk	62.07	99.63
40	Tecc Ltd	www.tecc.co.uk	61.92	99.98
41	Digiserve	www.digiserve.co.uk	59.55	99.8
42	Datanet International	www.data.net.uk	59.41	97.39
43	Charis Internet Services	www.charis.net	58.84	98.48
44	edNET	www.ednet.co.uk	58.38	99.98
45	Zoo Internet	www.zoo.co.uk	57.27	99.5
46	I-Way Limited	www.i-way.co.uk	50.97	99.87
47	Onyx Internet	www.onyxnet.co.uk	50.92	99.93
48	Netcetera	www.inetc.net	50.92	97.13
49	PSINet UK Ltd	www.uk.psi.net	50.82	99.11
50	REDNET	www.red.net	50.7	94.42
51	Internet Central	www.netcentral.co.uk	49.68	98.98
52	Myratech	www.myratech.co.uk	49.52	99.59
53	Atlas Internet	www.atlas.net.uk	49.14	97.89
54	Corpex	www.corpex.com	48.53	98.74
55	Soft Options UK	www.softopt.co.uk	45.33	96.18
56	ENTANET	www.enta.net	43.57	99.3
57	Sonnet Internet Ltd	www.sonnet.co.uk	41.65	99.15
58	The Web Factory	www.webfactory.co.uk	40.85	97.11
59	LDS Technology Ltd	www.lds.co.uk	36.73	96.94
60	AIC-Entanet	www.aic.co.uk/entanet	35.22	99.8
61	ME-NET!	www.me-net.net	33.24	96.45
62	UKIP	www.ukip.co.uk	31.84	99.7
63	Legend Internet	www.legend.co.uk	26.46	99.67
64	Quza	www.quza.com	25.53	99.83
65	Calligrafix	www.calligrafix.co.uk	22.98	99.85
66	Multimedia Machine Ltd	www.mmm.co.uk	20.75	99.43
67	Server World	www.serverworld.net	20.09	99.56
68	RapidSite	www.rapidsite.co.uk	19.32	99.39
69	Reeds web Hosting	www.reedsweb.net	18.54	98.91
70	1st Solution Internet	www.1st-solution.net	16.89	98.54
71	Abel Internet	www.abel.net.uk	16.57	99.85
72	WinNet	www.win-uk.net/	13.99	99.85
73	Data Link Internet	www.data-link.net	13.12	99.07
74	Global Gold Network Ltd	www.globalgold.co.uk	13.09	96.46
75	Thames Global Internet Services	www.tgis.co.uk	12.64	99.96
76	Stratus Net	www.stratus.net	12.64	99.04
77	Andover Online	www.andover.co.uk	11.4	99.98
78	Adept	www.adept.co.uk	10.76	99.65
79	Timewarp	www.timewarp.co.uk	9.23	99.39

Web host performance tests

You've entrusted your beloved Web site to a Web host. Now you want to know how well it's being looked after. Does it download quickly and reliably, or struggle down the wire? In conjunction with Zeus Technologies, we put 79 Web host companies to the test.

Once again Virtual Internet takes the top spot, with an even faster throughput than last month – an outrageous 424 kilobytes per second. The next six places are all held by the same hosts as last month, with just a few minor switches in position.

The top riser for July is NewNet, climbing the table from 19th position to a highly respectable 8th. Magic Moments also does well with a leap from position 31 to 12th. Four new entries have been included this month, but none of them achieved a ranking higher than 61.

Bear in mind that the throughput results are given in kilobytes per second and most regular modems rarely manage to get above 5 kilobytes per second. Only extremely fast connections through ISDN and cable can take advantage of the high throughput figures the top hosts manage to achieve.

How the tests work

We've based the hosting test rankings on transfer speed – how fast pages can be downloaded from the host server on to our test machines. One test machine is in the UK, the other in the US.

The second figure in the table shows the availability of the host server. Our test system tries to contact the host roughly every 15 minutes, 24 hours a day. The availability figure tells you how often it's able to get through.

The tests ran over the period 1-25 May 1999. For more details on how the tests are carried out, plus a look at how the current tests are going, visit **www.webperf.net**.

More about the company behind the Web host tests

The Internet Magazine Web host tests are carried out by Zeus Technology, which provides Web hosting companies and ISPs with high performance, easy to use, feature-rich Web server software.

Zeus Technology has crafted the fastest and most scalable Web server software in the world, providing reliability to its customers. Zeus has developed close working relationships with the industry leading hardware vendors such as HP, SGI, Compaq and IBM, and holds the world performance record in conjunction with HP.

Designed for large scale I-commerce solutions, the company's products contain the strongest levels of security available and, because of its European location, are free from US export restrictions. Zeus Technology and *Internet Magazine* are committed to delivering the best Web host service test in the UK. For more details, see **www.zeustechnology.com**.

pick a prov

The most up to date information is vital when you're choosing from the hundreds of Internet service providers, and you'll find no better guide than the next six pages of our Pick a Provider section. From free ISPs through to leased line providers, you'll find them all here...

The future's here and it's mobile

The first free ISP from a mobile phone operator in the UK has been launched. BT Cellnet is leading the way in what is bound to become a crowded market.

It's estimated that, within two years, all mobile phones will be Net-enabled. The most interesting reason BT Cellnet cites for its move into mobile Internet service providership is that within six years, more mobiles will be connected to the Internet than PCs.

Called Genie, the service has already attracted some 100,000 registered users and has won the Design Council's Millennium Award for Innovation and the *Financial Times* Global Telecoms Award for the Best Use of Internet Technology.

The new ISP offers free unlimited access, free email and 10Mb of free Web space.

www.genie.co.uk

Absolutely free, or alleged fraud?

The Web has spawned another free ISP offering an 0800 dial-up service. Freecall-UK's costs will be met by users receiving ads by email. But the ISP will only grant you free Net access after you've introduced a further four members.

At the moment, Freecall-UK isn't providing Net access. It's due to go live in July, but there are claims that the service is just a front to collect email addresses for spamming. We'd like to hear your experiences of this new ISP and would like to point out that Freecall-UK should not be confused with freecall.net.

www.freecall-uk.co.uk

News in brief

AOL has launched a new unlimited access subscription fee of £9.99, down from a minimum of £14.99 for three hours – a real bargain.
www.aol.co.uk

Cable and Wireless has launched a new ISDN package aimed at the small business market. It will cost £199 plus £30 monthly line rental.
www.cwcom.net

ClaraNET has introduced two new bandwidth deals. The first, with INS will mean an improvement on transatlantic bandwidth from 16 to 34 megabits. The second deal with Carrier 1 has added a further 6 megabits to the European connectivity.
www.clara.net

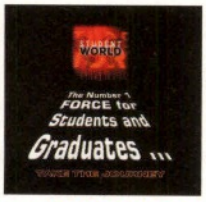
Zen Internet has laid down a price gauntlet to all the other major ISPs. The Rochdale-based provider is claiming its leased line packages have the lowest prices in Britain. So, how much is this lowest price? From only £7,300 for year one.
http://home.zen.co.uk

The UK's first free ISP, X-Stream, has added Carlton Online content to its online services to "increase the information and entertainment available to subscribers and site visitors."
www.x-stream.com

If you've got any ISP news or want to be included in our listings or ISP tests, email us at providers@internet.emap.com

New ISPs this month

As if students don't get enough opportunity to surf for free courtesy of the universities they attend, along comes a free ISP targeted expressly at them. Student World offers free Internet access and is fronted by a portal containing links to hints and tips on everything from choosing the right course to securing a job when the three years' loafing is over.



www.student-world.co.uk

Meanwhile the award for best new ISP name goes to Madasafish. It's another free ISP. In fact, it's more than free – if you're one of the first 10,000 users to join the community, you'll be given a nice crisp tenner. How mad is that?

www.madasafish.co.uk

More computer bods are clambering onto the free ISP juggernaut. This month it's Quantex Microsystems with the catchily-titled QTXnet, complete with the usual suspects of free access, free unlimited email and free Web space.

www.QTXnet.co.uk

Net Direct has also decided to launch a free ISP – NDO – but it's a completely separate ISP with its own servers and backbone. So it won't be cutting into the existing subscription service, which will continue to operate. Word is that there are some interesting developments for NDO in the pipeline, so stay tuned.

www.netdirect-online.co.uk

European telecoms company Interoute recently launched the free ISP Freedom Online. Now it plans to offer a 'pre-pay' access option under which subscribers would buy vouchers for access in units of £10, £20, or £50, either online or at their newsagent, just as many mobile phone users do.

www.freedom-online.co.uk

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vider

The most comprehensive listing of UK Internet service providers

Name	Phone	Email	Web page	Technical support	Cost (pm)	Backbone
Online Content Providers (you have to pay for content)						
AOL*	(0800) 279 1234	queryuk@aol.com	www.aol.co.uk	7.45-10.30 Mon-Fri / 9.00-17.30 Sat	from £4.95	AOL
CompuServe*	(0990) 000 200	customerservice@compuserve.co.uk	www.compuserve.co.uk	8.00-midnight every day	from £6.50	CompuServe
LineOne*	(0345) 777 464	enquiries@LineOne.net	www.LineOne.net	8.00-22.00 Mon-Sat / 10.00-22.00 Sun	£14.95	BTnet
MSN*	(0345) 002 000	ukweb@microsoft-contact.co.uk	www.uk.msn.com	24 hours a day	from £4.95	UUNET
Which? On-line*	(0645) 830 240	support@which.net	www.which.net	24 hours a day	£14.75	NTL Internet
Free Internet access services (all you pay is the cost of the phone calls)						
Bigwig.net	(0870) 740 1033	info@bigwig.net	www.bigwig.net	24 hours a day	free	Telewest, Tele Global and C&W
BT ClickFree	(0800) 731 7887	sales@btclick.com	www.btclickfree.com	8.00 - midnight	free	BTnet
Cable & Wireless Lite *	(0800) 092 3001	sales@cwcom.net	www.cwcom.net	24 hours a day	free	Cable & Wireless
CallNet	(0171) 335 8300	info@callnetuk.com	www.callnetuk.com	24 hours a day	free	Cable & Wireless
Connect Free	(0702) 115 2525	info@connectfree.net	www.connectfree.net	email only	free	Telinco
Currant Bun	(0845) 306 3636	none	www.currantbun.com	unknown	free	unknown
Free-Online	(0870) 706 0504	sales@free-online.net	www.free-online.net	7.00-23.00 every day	free	Force 9
Free4all	(01303) 775 500	enquiries@free4all.co.uk	www.free4all.co.uk	8.00 - 24.00	free	Cable & Wireless
FreeDotNet*	(0181) 938 3338	info@thefree.net	www.thefree.net	9.30-20.00 Mon Thur/ 9.30-17.30 Tue Wed Fri	free	Worldcom
Freeserve	(0990) 500 049	info@freeserve.net	www.freeserve.net	24 hours a day	free	Energis
FreeUK	(0900) 900 0900	cservices@freeuk.net	www.freeuk.net	24 hours a day	free	Colt Internet
Freewire	none	support@freewire.net.	www.freewire.net	9.00 - 17.30 Mon - Fri Sat 10.00 - 16.00	free	Mistral
Freezone Internet	(0870) 744 1111	info@freezone.co.uk	www.freezone.co.uk	9.00-21.00 every day	free	Telinco
IC24	(09067) 444 222	support@ic24.net	www.ic24.net	24 hours a day	free	Cable & Wireless
Internet Alliance Exchange*	(0800) 052 0523	info@iax.net	www.iax.net	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-13.00 Sat-Sun	free	NTL Internet
Net Direct Online (NDO)	(0800) 731 3311	info@netdirect.net.uk	www.netdirect-online.co.uk	24 hours a day	free	Net Direct
Screaming Net	(0800) 376 5262	support@i-way.net.uk	www.screaming.net	8.00 - 23.30 Mon-Fri	free	BTnet
Sniff Out	(0906) 690 3315	info@sniffout.co.uk	www.sniffout.net	24 hours a day	free	Cerbernet/C & W
TescoNet	(0845) 605 0200	info@tesco.net	www.tesco.co.uk	24 hours a day	free	BTnet
Themail	(0800) 195 8888	info@themail.co.uk	www.themail.co.uk	24 hours a day	free	Norweb/Nildram
UK Fantastic	(0702) 110 4458	info@ukf.co.uk	www.ukfantastic.net	24 hours a day	free	Cable Internet
Virgin Net	(0500) 558 800	advice@virgin.net	www.virgin.net	24 hours a day	free	NTL Internet
X Stream	(0870) 730 6466	info@x-stream.com	www.x-stream.com	24 hours a day	free	COLT Internet
Service providers offering full UK coverage						
4theNET Internet	(0870) 787 9106	sales@4thenet.co.uk	www.4thenet.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£3.99	Arena
AAP Internet	(0181) 427 1166	sales@aapi.co.uk	www.aapi.co.uk	10.00-19.00 Mon-Fri Sat 14.00-18.00	£12.91	Netkonect
Abel Internet	(0131) 445 5555	info@abel.net.uk or advice@abel.net.uk	w ww.abel.net.uk	09.00-23.00 every day	£8.81	Quza / Racal
Ace Internet	(0705) 066 7423	sales@ace-internet.co.uk	www.ace-internet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.99	Netkonect
ACGNET	(0171) 377 9114	sales@acgnet.co.uk	www.acgnet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Nildram
Adept	(01843) 850 444	sales@adept.co.uk	www.adept.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
AIC	(01279) 865 290	entanet@aic.co.uk	www.aic.co.uk/entanet	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£8.80	VBCnet
Airtime Internet Resources	(01254) 583 834/	sales@airtime.co.uk	www.airtime.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£15.27	UUNET/Morphy Holmes
Albatross	(01254) 503 410	enquiries@albatross.co.uk	www.albatross.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.74	BTnet
Argo Interactive	(01243) 815 815	sales@argonet.co.uk	www.argonet.co.uk	09.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£10	UUNET
Atlas Internet*	(0171) 312 0400	info@atlas.net.uk	www.atlas.net.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	Atlas
Aviators Network	(0700) 284 2867	info@aviators.net	www.aviators.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	GX Networks

Key: LL – leased line ISDN – ISDN BDU – Business Dial-Up

How to choose a service provider

Where to start

Most service providers let you connect to the Net for the price of a local phone call and this is an important factor in your choice. ISPs use systems run by companies such as BT, Energis and Mercury, where the phone number starts with 0345, 0645 or 0845.

Now look at how the providers charge for their services. There are free access providers, but most ISPs charge a flat fee for unlimited use of the Net. Other companies (such as AOL, MSN and CompuServe) have their own content and charge for the time you're online. They have options that give you three or five hours online. Once you exceed this figure you're charged at an hourly rate.

Out into the big wide Internet

If your ISP's Net connections are small and clogged, you can expect slow Web access, email that takes a long time to be delivered and many other problems. We run regular tests of service providers to find the fastest. See page 138 for this month's results.

Supporting the customer

Technical support is vital. You need help during the times you're on the Net. Don't be afraid to ask for the number before signing up. Give it a ring and ask them a tricky question.

Industry associations

There are a couple of Internet industry associations your ISP could join. The ISPA (Internet Service Providers Association) was set up to establish a code of practice for service providers. If you have a complaint about your service provider, you can take it to the ISPA (www.ispa.org.uk). Other service providers are members of the ISPC, a consortium of ISPs which combine their resources to provide an improved service (www.ispc.co.uk).

● Members of the ISPA are marked with an * while ISPC members have a † by their company name.

pick a provider

The most comprehensive listing of UK Internet service providers

Name	Phone	Email	Web page	Technical support	Cost (pm)	Backbone
Full UK coverage						
Baynet	(01222) 256 401	enq@baynet.co.uk	www.baynet.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	NTL
Beacon Internet Services	(01749) 831 056	sales@thebeacon.co.uk	www.thebeacon.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£9.50	NetOnline
Blue Chip	(0113) 232 0801	support@bchip.com	www.bchip.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£15	Planet Online
Boots Free Internet	(0870) 740 3979	support@boots.com	www.boots.com	24 hours a day	free	Highwayone
Boots Internet	(0870) 740 3979	support@boots.com	www.boots.com	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri	£12.75	Highwayone
BowieNet	(1 800) 587 7827	info@davidbowie.com	www.davidbowie.com	24 hours a day	£11.75	Global Internet
Breathe on line	(0800) 298 3030	sales@breathe.co.uk	www.breathe.co.uk	24 hours a day	from £6.99	Scottish Telecom
BT Internet*	(0800) 800 001	support@btinternet.com.	www.btinternet.com	24 hours a day	£11.75	BTnet
Cable Internet	(0500) 500 100	sales@cableinet.co.uk	www.cableinet.co.uk	9.00-21.00 every day	£11.75	Cable Internet
Cable Online	(0800) 052 2000	support@cableol.net	www.cableol.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	NTL Internet
Cable & Wireless Internet *	(0800) 092 3013	sales@cwcom.net	www.cwcom.net	24 hours a day	£10	Cable & Wireless
CableNet	(01424) 830 900	info@cablenet.net.	www.cablenet.net	24 hours a day	£9.95	VBCnet
Castle.Net	(0181) 477 5623	sales@castle.net.uk	www.castle.net.uk	6.00-21.00 Mon-Fri	£8.81	Technocom
Charis Internet Services	(0121) 248 5800	duncan@charis.net	www.charis.net	8.00-19.00 Mon-Fri / 8.00-12.00 Sat	£11.75	Wisper
Cheapnet	(0990) 168 160	info@cheapnet.co.uk	www.cheapnet.co.uk	9.00-18.30 Mon-Fri	£50 pa	Capethorn
Chertsey Communications	(01344) 640 594	info@chertsey.com	www.chertsey.co.uk	9.00-22.00 every day	£11.75	Wisper / VBCnet
City Netgates*	(0117) 907 4000	info@netgates.co.uk	www.netgates.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
CIX	(0181) 255 5151	sales@cix.co.uk	www.cix.co.uk	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri / 12.00-18.00 Sat	£7.34	BTnet / INS
ClaraNET	(0800) 358 2828	info@clara.net	www.clara.net	24 hours a day	£11.63	Netkonect / INS
Cocoon Internet Services	(0171) 792 8945	admin@cocoon.co.uk	www.cocoon.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-19.00 Sat-Sun	£17.62	UUNET
Colloquium	(0500) 008 543	sales@colloquium.co.uk	www.colloquium.co.uk	24 hours a day	£14.10	UUNET
Computalynx	(01604) 231 437	sales@computalynx.co.uk	www.computalynx.co.uk	9.00-21.00 every day	£11.75	Wisper
CPD Online	(0181) 446 7890	sales@cpd.co.uk	www.cyberspace.cpd.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Nildram
Cyber Guide†	(01753) 891 879	sales@cyber-guide.net	www.cyber-guide.co.uk	24 hours a day	£9.69	Cable Internet
Cyber Ware	(01733) 765 005	steve@cyberware.co.uk	www.cyberware.co.uk	9.00-midnight Mon-Fri	£11.74	BTnet
CYBERphile Internet	(01543) 454 840	info@cyberphile.co.uk	www.cyberphile.co.uk	8.30-18.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Xara
Cyberscape†	(01253) 724 000	admin@cyberscape.net	www.cyberscape.net	10.00-18.00 every day	£14.10	Cable Internet
Cygnet Internet Services	(0181) 880 4650	info@cygnet.co.uk	www.cygnet.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	UUNET
D M Priest	(0161) 486 1110	support@dmpriest.com	www.dmpriest.com	24 hour callback	£8	Cable Internet
Datanet	(01252) 810 081	info@data.net.uk	www.data.net.uk	24 hours a day	£14.69	Planet Online
Demon	(0181) 371 1234	sales@demon.net	www.demon.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	Demon
Direct Connection	(0800) 072 0000	sales@dircon.net	www.dircon.net	9.00-21.00 every day	£13.50	Direct Connection
Direct Net @ccess	(01232) 201 555	info@d-n-a.net	www.d-n-a.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£8.82	NTL Internet
DNA Internet Services†	(01604) 670 717	support@dna-is.com	www.dna-is.com	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-17.00 Sat	£9.99	Cable Internet
Easynet *	(0171) 681 4444	sales@easynet.net	www.easynet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.99	Easynet / BTnet
Ecosse Telecommunications	(0800) 026 7092	netsales@ecossetel.co.uk	www.ecossetel.co.uk	9.30-17.30 Mon-Fri	£9.99	Netkonect / Ecossetel
ENTANET*	(0500) 368 263	info@enta.net	www.enta.net	9.00-21.00 every day	£10.58	Cable & Wireless
Enterprise	(01624) 677 666	sales@enterprise.net	www.enterprise.net	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-16.00 Sat-Sun	£9.40	BTnet
EntWeb	(0800) 525 470	info@entweb.co.uk	www.entweb.co.uk	8-22.30 Mon-Fri/10-18.00 Sat/10-16.00 Sun	£10	Telinco
Farebase	(01322) 280 011	Info@farebase.co.uk	www.farebase.net	7.00-19.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-15.00 Sat-Sun	£16.45	Easynet
Force 9	(0800) 073 7800	sales@force9.net	www.force9.net	7.00-midnight every day	£5.86	Force 9
Freedom to Surf	(0181) 881 2111	sales@freedom2surf.net	www.freedom2surf.net	9.30-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Freedom to Surf
Frontier Internet Services	(0171) 536 9090	info@ftech.net	www.ftech.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri / noon-18.00 Sat	£170.38 pa	INS / Wisper
Gemsoft	(0114) 275 7070	sales@gemsoft.net	www.gemsoft.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Sat	£12.99	Wisper / INS
Global Internet*	(0870) 909 8041	info@global.net.uk	www.global.net.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	BTnet / GX Networks
Globewide Internet Services	(0161) 953 4018	info@globewide.com	www.globewide.com	10.00-22.00 Mon-Fri	£10	BTnet / Wisper
GreenNet *	(0171) 713 1941	support@gn.apc.org	www.gn.apc.org	10.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£15.86	UUNET
Hiway*	(01635) 573 300	info@hiway.co.uk	www.hiway.co.uk	8.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£14.69	GX Networks / Wisper
IBM Global Services	(0990) 426 426	globalnetwork@uk.ibm.com	www.ibm.net/	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£17.62	IBM Global Network
Icom-Web	(0800) 731 8419	sales@icom-web.com	www.icom-web.com	10.00-22.00 Mon-Fri	£9.40	Cable and Wireless
Ideal Internet Services†	(01942) 522 333	support@idealnet.co.uk	www.idealnet.co.uk	24 hour callback	£9.50	Cable Internet
INC Internet Services	(0115) 988 1880	inc@inc.co.uk	www.inc.co.uk	10.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	from £7.89	INS
Intensive Networks*	(01672) 511 054	sales@intensive.net	www.intensive.net	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
Interactive Web	(01926) 450 099	info@wwwuk.net	www.wwwuk.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£9.70	Cable & Wireless
Interalpha	(01703) 363 200	enquiry@interalpha.co.uk	www.interalpha.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	Wisper
Intonet	(0181) 941 9195	info@intonet.co.uk	www.intonet.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Sat	£11.75	BTnet
Inweb	(0845) 606 2014	info@inweb.net.uk	www.inweb.net.uk	24 hours a day	£10	Inweb Networks
K Web	(01273) 763 500	info@.k-web.co.uk	www.k-web.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.69	Planet Online
KeepNet	(01869) 276 000	info@keepnet.co.uk	www.keepnet.co.uk	none	£60 pa	Capethorn
KEMAnet	(07000) 790 290	sales@kema.co.uk	www.kema.co.uk	9.00-20.00 Mon-Fri / 1900-2100 Sat-Sun	£11	Netkonect
Kingston Internet	(01482) 602 500	info@kingston-internet.net	www.kingston-internet.net	8.30-midnight every day	£9.75	Planet Online
LarkNet	(01638) 716 423	info@larknet.co.uk	www.larknet.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-13.00 sat	£11.75	Cable Internet
Libertynet	(0800) 018 2001	customer@libertynet.co.uk	www.libertynet.co.uk	8.30-10.00 Mon-Fri 12.00-18.00 Sat	£11.75	Cable Inet
London Internet	(0171) 838 1199	info@london-int.net	www.london-internet.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£11.75	Intensive Networks
London Web Comms	(0800) 026 8306	internet@londonweb.net	www.londonweb.net	9.00-21.00 Mon-Sat / pager Sun	£14.68	Netkonect
Madhouse Net	(0800) 074 8283	info@madhouse.uk.com	www.madhouse.uk.com	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	NACAMAR
Mailbox Internet	(0171) 371 8558	info@mailbox.co.uk	www.mailbox.co.uk	8.00-midnight Mon-Fri	from £5.88	Netkonect
Mercia Internet	(01827) 69166	sales@mercia.net	www.mercia.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.50	Netkonect
Micromat Internet	(01933) 313 093	sales@micromat.net	www.micromat.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£10	Cable & Wireless
Ministry of Sound	(0870) 909 8200	sales@ministryofsound.net	www.ministryofsound.net	8.30-21.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00 18.00 Sat-Sun	£11.75	Global Internet
Mistral Internet	(0800) 328 7253	info@mistral-uk.net	www.mistral-uk.net	9.30-17.30 Mon-Fri / 10.00-16.00 Sat	BDU / ISDN/ LLO	Mistral

www.freewebaccess.co.uk

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FREE News
FREE Sports
FREE Weather
FREE Chat
FREE Horoscope
FREE Personals
and much much more

Have a computer, but no internet access?

FreeWebAccess Instructions
7 Steps to Get Online Right Now! (for Windows 95 or 98 and Internet Explorer 4)

1. *From the Windows desktop, double-click "My Computer", then 'Dial-Up Networking'.*
2. *Click 'Make New Connection'. Type in the name "FreeWebAccess" then click 'Next'.*
3. *Type "845" as the area code and "3011545" as the telephone number. Select 'United Kingdom (44)' as the country name and code. Click 'Finish'.*
4. *Back in the 'Dial-Up Networking' window double-click the new 'FreeWebAccess' item.*
5. *In the 'Connect To' window that appears, type "guest" as the user name and "guest" as the password then click 'Connect'.*
6. *From the Windows desktop, double-click 'Internet Explorer' to start your browser software. Type "http://www.freewebaccess.co.uk" into the browser address blank and press the 'Enter' key. (If the title bar above the browser says 'Working Offline', click 'Refresh'.)*
7. *Once connected to the 'FreeWebAccess' home page, follow the instructions carefully.*

or call 0171 510 5925

GET FREE WEB ACCESS TODAY

Visit

www.freewebaccess.co.uk

pick a provider

The most comprehensive listing of UK Internet service providers

Name	Phone	Email	Web page	Technical support	Cost (pm)	Backbone
Full UK coverage						
Mitsubishi Electric Net Svces	(0800) 226 600	enquiries@menet.net	www.menet.net	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-18.00 Sat	£9.75	BTnet
Moonlight*	(01276) 856 868	sales@moon-light.co.uk	www.moon-light.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£14.95	Cable Internet
Nationwide ISP	(0800) 731 6860	sales@nationwide.co.uk	www.nationwide.co.uk	24 hours a day	£7.50	BTnet
Net Online	(07000) 638 665	sales@nol.co.uk	www.nol.co.uk	9.00-20.00 every day	£11.75	Global One / Quza
NetDirect Internet	(0800) 731 3311	info@netdirect.net.uk	www.netdirect.net.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-18.00 Sat-Sun	from £8.99	BTnet / BusinessNet
Netkonect	(0171) 345 7777	info@netkonect.net	www.netkonect.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-13.00 Sat	£11.75	Netkonect
NetMatters	(01502) 580 000	info@netmatters.co.uk	www.netmatters.co.uk	9.00 - 20.00 every day	£11.75	Wisper / VBCnet
Newbury Internet	(01635) 569 123	sales.enq@newbury.net	www.newbury.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	Intensive Networks
NewNet*	(07000) 639 638	sales@newnet.co.uk	www.newnet.co.uk/home	9.00-22.00 every day	£9.74	Wisper / VBCnet
Nildram	(0800) 496 2903	sales@nildram.net	www.nildram.net	9.00-23.00 every day	from £5	Nildram
On-Line Internet	(01963) 32904	info@ol-i.com	www.ol-i.com	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-13.00 Sat-Sun	BDU / ISDN	BTnet
ONET	(0800) 980 6998	sales@onet.co.uk	www.onet.co.uk	9.00-20.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-16.00 Sat	£175 for life	GX Networks
Onyx	(0345) 715 715	sales@onyxnet.co.uk	www.onyxnet.co.uk	8.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Onyx
Orchid Information Systems	(01763) 244 007	internet@orchinfo.co.uk	www.orchidinfo.co.uk	8:30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cerbernet
Paradise Internet	(01256) 414 863	sales@pins.co.uk	www.pins.co.uk	11.00-19.00 Mon-Fri	£9.40	Netkonect
Paston Chase	(01603) 502 061	sales@paston.co.uk	www.paston.co.uk	9.00-17.00 every day	£10.58	Wisper
Pavilion Internet	(01273) 607 072	info@pavilion.co.uk	www.pavilion.co.uk	24 hours a day	£12.55	Easynet / BTnet
Pinnacle Internet	(01903) 524 999	info@pncl.co.uk	www.pncl.co.uk	8.30-19.00 Mon-Fri	£14.75	UUNET
Pipemedia OnLine	(01455) 828 218	sales@pipemedia.net	www.pipemedia.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	VBCnet
Poptel*	(0171) 923 9465	info@poptel.net	www.poptel.org.uk	9.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	GX Networks
PORTHILL.COM	(0702) 110 1200	sales@porthill.com	www.porthill.com	10.00-22.00 every day	from £3.99	Cable Internet
Portland Communications	(0181) 942 1115	sales@portland.co.uk	www.portland.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Portland Comms
Power Internet*	(01908) 605 188	info@powernet.co.uk	www.powernet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£14.10	BTnet
Prestel Online*	(0990) 223 300	enquiry@netsales.prestel.co.uk	www.prestel.co.uk	24 hours a day	£10.56	Scottish Telecom
Primex	(01908) 643 597	info@alpha.primex.co.uk	www.primex.co.uk	8.00-21.00 every day	£11.75	On-Net / Netkonect
Pro-Net Internet Services*	(0181) 200 3565	sales@pro-net.co.uk	www.pro-net.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-16.00 Sat	£116.33 pa	Cable Internet
ProWeb	(0500) 636 343	sales@proweb.net	www.proweb.co.uk	24 hours a day	from £10	Diamond Cable Comms
PurpleNet	(0800) 783 4535	sales@purplenet.co.uk	www.purplenet.co.uk	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-18.00 Sat-Sun	£5.99	Wisper
Python Internet	(0870) 606 0125	sales@python.co.uk	www.python.co.uk	9.30-19.00 Mon Fri	£11.75	INS
RapidNet*	(0151) 722 0304	sales@rapid.net.uk	www.rapid.net.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£9.40	Cable Internet
Research Machines*	(01235) 826 868	sales@rmplc.co.uk	www.rmplc.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri	£12.50	GX Networks / Wisper
ROM Group	(01237) 426 110	info@rom.net	www.rom.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	UUNET / GX Networks
RSC Internet	(01224) 585 113	info@rsc.co.uk	www.rsc.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£9.99	BTnet
SAQ Internet	(0870) 737 7700	sales@saqnet.co.uk	www.saqnet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£12.50	COLT
Scotland Online	(0845) 027 2027	admin@sol.co.uk	www.scotland.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	Scottish Telecom
Searley Data Services	(01703) 892 351	info@searley.net	www.searley.net	9-21.00 Mon-Fri / 9-11 Sat / 18.00-21.00 Sun	£11	Interweb
SIMNET	(0800) 0745 547	sales@simnet.co.uk	www.simnet.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-12.00 Sat	£9.40	Telinco Internet Services
SoftNet	(01675) 464 488	postmaster@softnet.co.uk	www.softnet.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£9.99	Planet Online
Sonnet Internet	(0171) 891 2000	enquire@sonnet.co.uk	www.sonnet.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-18.00 Sat	£14.69	BusinessNet
SOS Internet	(01271) 321 145	sosi@sosi.net	www.sosi.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Sat	£11.75	Intensive Networks
SurfAid	(0870) 907 1000	info@surfaid.org	www.surfaid.org	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-18.00 Sat-Sun	£8.81	GX Networks
Surflink	(0181) 903 2777	info@surflink.co.uk	www.surflink.co.uk	24 hours a day	£9.99	BTnet
Swift Internet	(0845) 6060210	sales@swiftinter.net	www.swiftinter.net	9 - 19.00 Mon-Fri 10.00 - 17.00 Sat-Sun	from £86.95 pa	Cable & Wireless
Telinco Internet Services*	(0800) 542 0800	sales@telinco.net	www.telinco.net	9.00-21.00 Mon-Sat	£5	Cable Internet
The Network Group	(01293) 616 000	info@network-group.com	www.network-group.com	8.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£15	UUNET
Tia Net	(0800) 092 6070	info@tianet.com	www.tianet.com	24 hours a day	£6.93	Cable Internet
Tiggers Net	(0118) 973 6060	support@tiggers.net	www.tiggers.net	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cable Internet
Timewarp Internet*	(0161) 950 8855	sales@timewarp.co.uk	www.timewarp.co.uk	9.00-20.30 Mon-Fri	£8.25	Cable Internet / Wisper
TMS	(01902) 420 999	sales@tmsnet.co.uk	www.tms.net.uk	8.30-17.00 Mon-Fri	£12	BTnet
TriNET	(01539) 731 000	dmacdonald@trinetimb.com	www.trinetimb.com	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Planet Online
U-Net*	(01925) 484 444	sales@u-net.net	www.u-net.net	24 hours a day	£14.10	U-Net
UK Online	(01749) 333 333	sales@ukonline.co.uk	www.ukonline.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.99	Easynet
UKIP*	(01772) 908 000	internet@ukip.co.uk	www.ukip.co.uk	9-18.00 Mon-Fri /9-17.00 Sat /10-16.00 Sun	£146.87 pa	Cable Internet / NACAMAR
UKPeople.net	(0800) 542 5200	info@ukpeople.net	www.ukpeople.net	9.00-21.00 Mon-Sat	£10	Cable Internet
UniNet Internet Services	(0800) 783 7499	info@uninet.co.uk	www.uninet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.15	Planet Online
UUNET (Pipex Dial)*	(0500) 567 000	sales@uk.uu.net	www.uk.uu.net	9.00-20.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-18.00 Sat	£14.98	UUNET
Valiant Internet Services	(0191) 523 8544	sales@valiant.co.uk	www.valiant.co.uk	9.30-17.30 Mon-Fri	£9.99	Cable & Wireless
VAS-NET	(0800) 389 0070	sales@vas-net.net	www.vas-net.net	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri	From £4.88	VAS-NET
Virtual Internet	(0800) 980 9107	info@netcomuk.co.uk	www.netcom.net.uk	24 hours a day	£14.95	Netcom
Wave Rider Internet	(0121) 603 3888	info@waverider.net.uk	www.waverider.co.uk	24 hours a day	£12	VBCnet
Webpro	(0181) 886 2424	info@webpro.net.uk	www.webpro.net.uk	24 hours a day	£14.69	Planet Online
Webscape	(01963) 370 800	webmaster@webscape.co.uk	www.webscape.org	24 hours a day	£141 pa	GX Networks
WinNET Communications	(0181) 930 6688	sales@win-uk.net	www.win-uk.net/	9.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£17.63	UUNET
Wirenet Amiga	(01925) 496 482	sales@wirenet.co.uk	www.wirenet.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-13.00 Sat	£14.25	U-Net
WiSS	(01248) 602 405	enquiries@wiss.co.uk	www.wiss.co.uk	9.00-22.00 every day	£11.75	Celtic Internet
Woden Network Systems	(0121) 242 4500	sales@woden.com	www.woden.com	8.30-22.30 Mon-Fri	£10	VBC Net
Worldwide Web Services	(01784) 898 800	info@webs.co.uk	www.webs.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£17.62	U-Net
Zetnet Services	(01595) 696 667	info@zetnet.co.uk	www.zetnet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£7.50	BTnet / Wisper
Zoo Internet	(0181) 961 7000	enquiry@zoo.co.uk	www.zoo.co.uk	9.00-21.00 every day	£6.95	Zoo Internet
Zulu Internet	(01494) 758 895	sales@zulu.co.uk	www.zulu.co.uk	8.00-21.00 every day	from £5	Nildram

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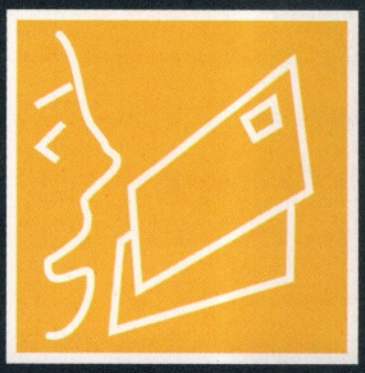

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www.contactbox.co.uk

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Name	Phone	Email	Web page	Technical support	Cost (pm)	Backbone
Ireland						
Creative Online Media	(01232) 370 124	info@creativeonlinemedia.com	www.creativeonlinemedia.com	8.30-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	PSInet
DNA Internet	(01232) 210 555	sales@dnet.co.uk	www.d-n-a.net	09.00-21.00 Mon - Fri 09.00-17.00 Sat	£8.25	NTL
Indigo	(00353) 1 604 6901	info@indigo.ie	www.indigo.ie	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	AT&T / BBN Planet
Ireland On-Line	(00353) 1 604 6800	sales@iol.ie	www.iol.ie	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£15.13	UUNET
Telecom Internet	(00353) 1 269 22 22	sales@tinet.ie	www.tinet.ie	9.30-17.30 Mon-Fri	£14.10	Telecom Eireann
The Internet Business	(01232) 424 190	info@tibus.net	www.tibus.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£8.81	BTnet
Unite Solutions	(01232) 777 338	solutions@unite.net	www.unite.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£12.50	BTnet
WydeWorld	(01232) 300 555	info@wydeworld.com	www.wydeworld.com	8.30-21.00 Mon-Fri	£125 pa	NTL Internet
East						
AngliaNet*	(01473) 211 922	tony@anglianet.co.uk	www.anglianet.co.uk	8.00-21.00 Mon-Sat / 11.00-19.00 Sun	£11.75	Wisper
KeConnect Internet Services	(01473) 403 020	sales@keconnect.co.uk	www.keme.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-14.00 Sat-Sun	£11.75	Wisper
Net Solutions Europe	(01255) 233 300	sales@nse.co.uk	www.nse.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£193.88 pa	Technocom
RJT Internet Services	(01493) 857 048	postmaster@rjt.co.uk	www.rjt.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Sat	£9.39	BTnet
London and South East						
Alpha-Access	(01344) 750 505	office@alpha-access.co.uk	www.alpha-access.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
Amity Internet	(0500) 200 171	info@amity.co.uk	www.amity.co.uk	8.00-19.00 Mon-Fri	£11.63	BTnet
Bogomip	(0181) 960 3050	info@mail.bogo.co.uk	www.bogo.co.uk	10.00-20.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-17.00 Sat-Sun	£12	BTnet
Exconet	(01268) 453 000	sales@exconet.co.uk	www.exconet.co.uk	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Nildram
ExNet Systems*	(0181) 296 5577	info@exnet.com	www.exnet.com	10.00-midnight Mon-Fri	£14.10	VBCnet
FlexNet	(01638) 711 550	info@flexnet.net	www.flexnet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Netcom
Inter-Computer Technology	(0171) 486 9601	sales@inctech.com	www.inctech.com	24 hours a day	£17.63	Wisper
INTERact Internet*	(01753) 776 699	sales@interact.net.uk	www.interact.net.uk	24 hours a day	from £4	Cable Internet
K2 Internet Services	(01293) 416 666	sales@K2net.co.uk	www.k2net.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.95	Netkonect
KBnet	(01234) 271 900	sales@kbnet.co.uk	www.kbnet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£12.93	Cabletel
KDD Euro Web	(0800) 010 510	sales@kew.net	www.kew.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£17.62	Internet KDD
KENTnet Internet Services	(01622) 844 801	sales@kentnet.co.uk	www.kentnet.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-17.00 Sat-Sun	£11.75	BTnet
Maidenet	(01628) 825 757	enquires@maidenet.co.uk	www.maidenet.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£17.63	BTnet
MetroNet	(0800) 074 1881	info@metronet.co.uk	www.metronet.co.uk	10.30-19.00 Mon-Sat	£12.68	Quza
Moose	(01923) 238 248	info@moose.co.uk	www.moose.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	BTnet
Netmania	(0181) 252 1199	info@netmania.co.uk	www.netmania.co.uk	11.00-23.00 Mon-Fri	£42.50 pa	Wisper
SoftProg NET	(0181) 788 0656	sales@softprog.co.uk	www.softprog.net	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri	£14.10	BTnet
Thames Global Net Services*	(01344) 641 627	info@tgis.co.uk	www.tgis.co.uk	9.00-21.00 every day	£9.99	Cable Internet
UK2NET	(0171) 538 0253	sales@uk2net.com	www.uk2net.com	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	from £9.69	GX Networks
VossNet*	(01753) 737 800	info@vossnet.co.uk	www.vossnet.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-15.00 Sat	£11.75	Cable Internet
Websurfer	(0181) 354 8000	info@websurfer.co.uk	www.websurfer.co.uk	10.00-22.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
Midlands						
Brunel Internet	(01922) 4598 90	sales@brunel.co.uk	www.brunel.co.uk	9.00-18.00 every day	£15	BTnet
Discovery	(01203) 364 400	invent@discover.co.uk	www.discover.co.uk	8.30-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Technocom
EMNET	(0115) 956 8260	enquiries@emnet.co.uk	www.emnet.co.uk/	8.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£7.82	Wisper
Fenetre	(01538) 398 298	sales@fenetre.co.uk	www.fenetre.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£9.40	BTnet
Foobar Internet*	(0116) 233 0033	sales@foobar.co.uk	www.foobar.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Netkonect
GMTnet	(01509) 269 999	sales@gmtnet.co.uk	www.gmtnet.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	BTnet
Griffin Internet	(01332) 606 160	info@griffin.net .uk	www.griffin.net .uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£14.69	GX Networks
Netscafe	(01242) 232 121	sales@netscafe.co.uk	www.netscafe.co.uk	10.00-22.00 every day	£100 pa	Wisper
Newgate Communications	(0121) 327 6633	marketing@newgate.co.uk	www.newgate.co.uk.	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£12.50	Easynet
Northants Computer Centre*	(01604) 622539	tony@nccnet.co.uk	www.nccnet.co.uk	9.00-21.00 every day	£11.75	Cable Internet
Prima.net	(0115) 913 3372	sales@prima.net	www.prima.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.74	Cable Internet
Skynet Internet Services*	(01604) 452 245	sales@skynet.co.uk	www.skynet.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-17.00 Sat	£11.75	Cable Internet
Stayfree Internet	(0116) 291 0909	sales@stayfree.co.uk	www.stayfree.co.uk	24 hours a day	£9.99	Wisper
The Internet in Nottingham*	(0115) 956 2222	info@innotts.co.uk	www.innotts.co.uk	10.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£14.69	Wisper
WebLeicester*	(0116) 223 0070	sales@webleicester.net	www.webleicester.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cable & Wireless
WyeNet*	(01989) 762 476	sales@wyenet.net	www.wyenet.co.uk	9.00-21.00 every day	£14.10	Cable Internet
North East						
FirstNet Services	(0113) 294 4224	sales@firstnet.co.uk	www.firstnet.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Sat	£12.50	Energis
Legend Internet	(01274) 743 500	sales@legend.co.uk	www.legend.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Sat	£14.69	Sprint
NetBytes Internet	(0113) 294 4273	info@netbytes.yks.com	www.netbytes.yks.com	10.00-20.00 Mon-Fri	£7.50	Sprint
North West						
Chester Internet	(01244) 341 418	ken@chesternet.co.uk	www.chesternet.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	GX Networks
Cybase*	(0151) 227 4244	sales@cybase.co.uk	www.cybase.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cable Internet
Freeway Internet	(01204) 431 313	sales@freeway.co.uk	www.freeway.co.uk	24 hours a day	£12.95	Wisper
Kencomp Internet	(01539) 722 559	info@kencomp.net	www.kencomp.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Sat	£11.75	Intensive Networks
Mersinet	(0151) 475 4751	info@mersinet.co.uk	www.mersinet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	Wisper
Talk 101	(01925) 245 145	sales@mail.talk-101.com	www.talk-101.com	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
The Internet Shop	(01253) 763 333	black-admin@blackpool.net	www.blackpool.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Intensive Networks
Scotland						
Ednet	(0131) 466 7003	info@ednet.co.uk	www.ednet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
Foremost Training	(0141) 566 6377	sales@scotnet.co.uk	www.scotnet.co.uk	8.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
TweedNet	(01573) 229 933	mike@scotborders.co.uk	www.scotborders.co.uk	24 hours a day	£17.63	Scottish Telecom / Wisper
South Central						
Andover On-line	(01264) 334 822	info@andover.co.uk	www.andover.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-17.30 Sat	£12	GX Networks
Athene Internet	(01329) 828 000	jdyer@athene.co.uk	www.athenenet.co.uk	9.00-20.00 Mon-Sat	£13.50	Wisper

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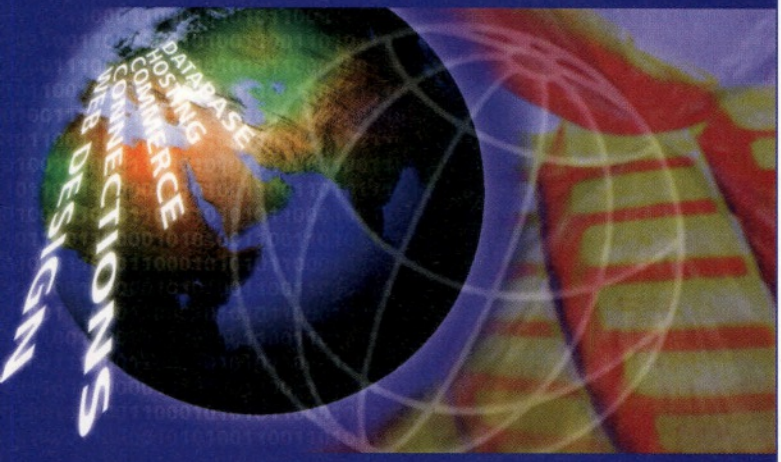

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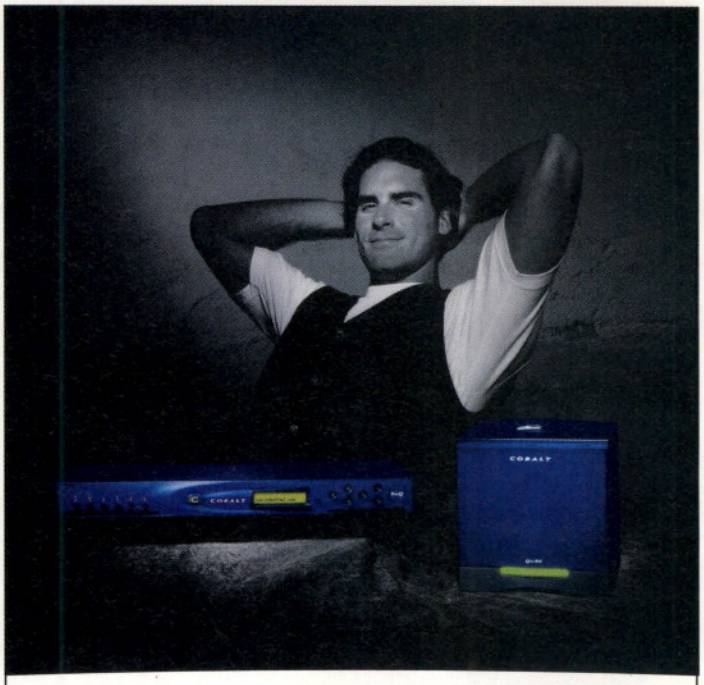

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South Central						
Bournemouth Net	(01202) 292 900	sales@bournemouth-net.co.uk	www.bournemouth-net.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Sat	£10	Quza and PSI
CintraNet*	(01703) 571 000	accounts@cintranet.co.uk	www.cintranet.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cable Internet
LDS Technology	(01202) 659 991	sales@lds.co.uk	www.lds.co.uk	9.00-17.00 every day	£14.99	BTnet
Portsmouth Net	(01705) 420 066	sales@portsmouth-net.co.uk	www.portsmouth-net.co.uk	9.00-17.30 every day	£10	Quza
Southampton Net	(01794) 504 040	sales@southampton-net.co.uk	www.southampton-net.co.uk	9.00-17.30 every day	£10	Quza
Total Connectivity Providers	(01703) 571 300	sales@tcp.co.uk	www.tcp.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£9.99	VBC / Wisper
Wales						
Cardiff Internet Services	(01222) 311 3134	enq@cardiff-net.co.uk	www.cardiff-net.co.uk	8.30-19.00 Mon-Fri / Sat 9.00-18.00	£11.75	NTL Internet
Connect Wales Internet	(01994) 230 330	sales@connect-wales.co.uk	www.connect-wales.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cymru Net
Cyberstop Interent Services	(01792) 465 050	internet@cyberstop.co.uk	www.cyberstop.net	24 hours a day	£9.95	NTL Internet
Telecall	(0117) 941 4141	sales@telecall.co.uk	www.telecall.co.uk	10.15-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	BTnet / Wisper
Vapro	(01792) 775 511	vapro.sales@vapro.net	www.vapro.net	24 hours a day	£10.56	Intensive Networks
Business Providers						
1st Solution Internet*	(01256) 382 720	sales@1st-solution.net	www.1st-solution.net	9.00-18.30 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	INS
ACE	(01670) 528 204	info@ace.co.uk	www.ace.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	ISDN / LL	Planet Online
Apple Centre Warrington	(01925) 444 499	sales@applecentre.com	www.applecentre.com	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	Wisper
BTnet*	(0345) 585 110	sales@bt.net	www.bt.net	24 hours a day	LL	BTnet
BusinessNet*	(0171) 390 9933	sales@business.net.uk	www.business.net.uk	24 hours a day	BDU / ISDN / LL	BusinessNet
Cerbernet*	(0171) 360 8000	sales@cerbernet. net	www.cerbernet.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri / pager Sat-Sun	LL	Wisper
COLT	(0171) 390 9099	info@colt.net	www.colt.net	24 hours a day	LL	COLT Internet
CommUnity Internet*	(01865) 856 000	info@community.net.uk	www.community.net.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	VBCnet / Wisper
Croxsons New Media	(01494) 777 999	info@cnm-uk.net	www.cnm-uk.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	LL	INS
Data Link Internet	(01522) 681 100	sales@data-link.net	www.data-link.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	LL	BTnet
Dial Internet*	(01372) 456 000	sales@dialin.co.uk	www.dialin.co.uk	8.30-18.30 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	BTnet
DIALnet Connect*	(0800) 881 881	sales@dialnet.com	www.dialnet.com	24 hours a day	BDU / ISDN / LL	Cable Internet / Wisper
ElectricMail	(01223) 501 333	info@elmail.co.uk	www.elmail.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	ISDN / LL	GX Networks
Epinet	(01242) 821 000	info@epinet.co.uk	www.epinet.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	BDU	GX Networks / Energis
Forfront Web Services	(01737) 357 474	info@forfront.net	www.forfront.net	9.00 - 18.00 Mon-Fri	BDU/ISDN/LL	Pavillion Internet
GX Networks	(0181) 957 1250	sales@gxn.net	www.gxn.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	LL	GX Networks
Hotlinks Internet Services	(0181) 883 6316	webmaster@hotlinks.co.uk	www.hotlinks.co.uk/	9.30-midnight Mon-Fri	BDU	Netkonect
I-Way Soho	(0171) 734 5734	sales@i-way.net.uk	www.i-way.co.uk	8.00-18.30 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	VBCnet / UUNET / PSInet
ICM NetServ	(0800) 614 581	sales@netserv.net	www.netserv.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDO/ISDN/LL	Wisper / BTnet
Impact Web Publishing	(01628) 522 099	info@impactwp.com	www.impactwp.com	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	LL	GX Networks
Internet Central*	(01270) 611 000	sales@netcentral.co.uk	www.netcentral.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	BDU / ISDN / LL	Cable Internet
InterNet for Business	(01224) 333 370	info@ifb.net	www.ifb.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	Wisper
Internet Network Services	(0800) 467 638	info@insnet.net	www.insnet.net	24 hours a day	ISDN / LL	Internet Network Services
Internet Solutions for Business	(01203) 633 177	sales@is4b.net	www.business-solutions.net	24 hours a day	BDU / ISDN / LL	BTnet / PSInet
Internet UK*	(0845) 070 0006	www.internet-uk.net	sales@internet-uk.net	7.00-midnight every day	ISDN / LL	Wisper
Interweb Design	(01344) 842 979	andrew@inweb.net.uk	www.inweb.net.uk	24 hours a day	BDU / ISDN / LL	Interweb Design
IPF.NET	(0171) 213 9666	enquiries@ipf.net.uk	www.ipf.net.uk	9.00am-18.00 Mon-Fri	ISDN / LL	IPF.NET
iQ Internet	(01273) 327 088	sales@iql.co.uk	www.iql.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	Planet
ISPC*	(01628) 639 595	barryr@ispc.net	www.ispc.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	LL	Cable Internet
Mannet	(01624) 623 841	postmaster@mcb.net	www.mcb.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	BTnet
Mitoo	(0171) 209 1515	sales@mitoo.co.uk	www.mitoo.co.uk/	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	ISDN / LL	BTnet
NACAMAR	(01438) 715 100	info@nacamar.net uk	www.nacamar.co.uk	24 hours a day	BDU / ISDN / LL	NACAMAR
Netcom Internet	(0800) 980 9107	info@netcomuk.co.uk	www.netcom.net.uk	24 hours a day	BDU/ISDN/LL	Netcom
NetForce Group	(01245) 257 788	sales@netforce.net	www.netforce.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	Wisper / BTnet
Netlink Solutions	(0800) 0743 936	support@netlink.uk.com	www.netlink.uk.com	24 hours a day	ISDN	UUNET / Netkonect.
NORWEB.net	(0800) 195 0196	sales@norwebcomms.com	www.norwebcomms.com	24 hours a day	ISDN / LL	The Web Factory
NTL Internet / ENABLIS	(0800) 607 608	sales@ntli.com	www.ntli.com	24 hours a day	BDU / ISDN / LL	NTL Internet
Odyssey Corporation	(0181) 740 7000	info@sales.odysseynet.co.uk	www.odysseynet.net	24 hours a day	BDU	Odyssey
Planet Online*	(0113) 234 5566	info@theplanet.net	www.theplanet.net	24 hours a day	ISDN / LL	Planet Online
PlugIn.co.uk	(0800) 783 9250	sales@plugin.co.uk	www.plugin.co.uk	8.00 - 18.00 every day	BDU/ISDN/LL	Cable & Wireless
PlusNet Technologies	(0800) 073 7370	sales@plus.net.uk	www.plus.net.uk	24 hours a day	ISDN / LL	PlusNet
PSI Net	(01223) 577 577	sales@uk.psi.com	www.uk.psi.com	24 hours a day	ISDN / LL	PSI Net
Quza*	(0800) 528 0000	info@quza.com	www.quza.com	24 hours a day	BDU / ISDN / LL	Quza
REDNET	(01494) 513 333	info@red.net	www.red.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	INS
Relay Business Systems	(0345) 369 999	enquiries@relay.co.uk	www.relay.co.uk	24 hours a day	BDU / ISDN / LL	BTnet
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Smartways Internet	(01604) 670 500	info@smartways.com	www.smartways.com	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	Wisper
Star Internet	(01285) 884 400	info@star.co.uk	www.star.net.uk	7.00 -19.00 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	Global One / Wisper
Technocom	(01753) 714 200	isales@technocom.net	www.technocom.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	Technocom
The Education Exchange	(0181) 239 5000	info@edex.net	www.edex.net	24 hours a day	ISDN / LL	INS
VAS-NET	(01732) 866 529	sales@vas-net.net	www.vas-net.net	24 hours a day	BDU / ISDN / LL	VAS-NET
VBCnet*	(0117) 929 1316	sales@vbc.net	www.vbc.net	24 hours a day	LL	VBCnet
Web Plus*	(0345) 932 758	sales@webplus.co.uk	www.webplus.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-20.00 Sat-Sun	BDU / ISDN / LL	Web Ltd / BTnet
WebScotland	(0141) 418 0880	sales@webscotland.co.uk	www.webscotland.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN / LL	BTnet
Wisper	(0181) 239 5008	sales@wisper.net	www.wisper.net	24 hours a day	LL	Wisper
Zen Internet	(01706) 713 714	sales@zen.co.uk	www.zen.co.uk	9.00-20.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-17.00 Sat-Sun	BDU / ISDN / LL	BTnet
Zereau	(0800) 064 1770	sales@zereau.com	www.zereau.com	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDU / LL	Wisper

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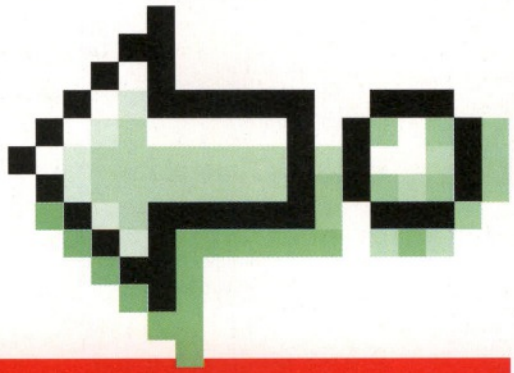

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If you've come across any bizarre Web stories, email them to smiley@internet.emap.com. Any we use win a mystery prize

The News of the Strange

Gates attacks penguin

A German Web site devoted to the Linux operating system has fallen foul of Microsoft. What's got Microsoft all red in the face and jumping up and down is an advertising slogan. The Linux site has been asked to remove the offending slogan because it's too similar to Microsoft's 'Where do you want to go today?'. Smiley can't help thinking the real reason is that 'Where do you want to go tomorrow?' is better than Bill's effort.

www.linux.de

Angels with dirty faces

The Guardian Angels ride on the London Underground and protect the innocent from muggers. But the original Angels in the US are back in the news, suing the founders of the online version (The CyberAngels) for breach of contract, copyright infringement, fraud, libel and a few other things. It's also done a runner with 80 per cent of the CyberAngels' volunteers and set up a new organisation called SafetyEd to continue its work in tracking down child pornographers online. Smiley suggests they both slog it out on the tube – Angel to Angel.

www.cyberangels.org
www.safetyed.org

Name your price

The shortage in desirable domain names has kickstarted another bout of auctions at sky high prices. Take the three chaps who bought the wallstreet.com domain five years ago for around $200. The guys run a small ISP in Arizona and were quite happily sitting on the name when they got an offer for a cool $250,000 from a pornography site operator. But sensing that an organised sale could raise more, they decided to auction it to the highest bidder. This was a Venezuelan Internet casino operation which paid $1.03 million – an astonishing $97,000 a letter.

www.wallstreet.com

The Smiley guide to Internet users

No 13: Ireland On-Line

Age: No real restriction – as long as you're Irish... or you've got an Irish grandmother... or you've ever tried Guinness...

Appearance: Masters of disguise, looking like a potato farmer one day and a leprechaun the next. Giveaways are the ginger hair, pint of Guinness and a tendency to line up and dance very fast at the slightest provocation. The women, on the other hand, are all gorgeous, without exception.

Hangouts: The Eurovision Song Contest, at the end of the rainbow, on building sites, and generally as far away from Ireland as possible.

Known associates: Other men in donkey jackets, Boyzone, Frank Carson, the cast of Father Ted, and the ever-present priest.

Likes: Drinking, cursing, fighting, dancing and harping on about Celtic tradition.

Hates: Irish theme bars, being called Paddy even if their name *is* Paddy, the British, but more than anything else, Daniel O'Donnell.

In other words: Your typical hardworking, heavy drinking, fun loving rough diamond Irishman that we all envy.

Philosophy: "I've got a cousin call Phil O'Sophy."

Latest fad: Not winning the Eurovision Song Contest.

Most likely to say: "Feck, arse, girls, drink."

Most unlikely to say: "Have you heard the one about the Irishman..."

More from: www.iol.ie

Bookmarks of the rich and famous...

Net celebs open up their browsers and share their bookmarks with *Internet Magazine* readers. This month it's the turn of doctor, actor and comedian...

Tony Gardner

Tony is one half of comedy duo Struck Off and Die who won a Writers Guild award for best comedy show in 1994. He's appeared on the Channel 5 quiz show *Tibs and Fibs*, in Channel 4's *Armstrong and Miller* comedy series and in BBC2's *Sunnyside Farm* and *Grown Ups*, as well as filing the odd report for *Holiday*. But he's probably best known for being the annoying chap in the Renault Megane ads.

So what's so great about the Internet, Tony?
"I used to trawl for hours through the books in the library, now I can sit at home. I knew the *Guinness Book of Records* inside out – I'm an only child, you see."

And the downside?
"It appears to make it easier for those who abuse children to get their kicks. Hunt them down."

So what are your favourite Web sites?

Internet Movie Database

http://us.imdb.com

Because I'm a luvvie and I like to see what people who I work with have done.

Dogpile

http://dogpile.com

One of those multi-search engine things, which presses all the right buttons.

Railtrack Timetables

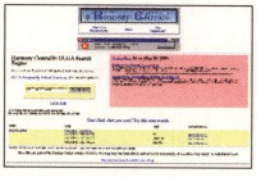
www.rail.co.uk/ukrail/planner/planner.htm

Plan your rail journey – excellent! And it makes me sound like a complete tosser, too.

British Medical Journal

www.bmj.com/bmj

Medical site. Gives you access to Medline if you're a BMA member, which means you can look up medical papers. Boring, but true.



Harmony Central Guitar Chord Archive

www.harmonycentral.com/Guitar/tab.html

Guitar tabs for free. Closed down now, for legal reasons, but you can still get stuff.

Want to know more about Tony Gardner? Visit his Web site at www.cix.co.uk/~tgardner

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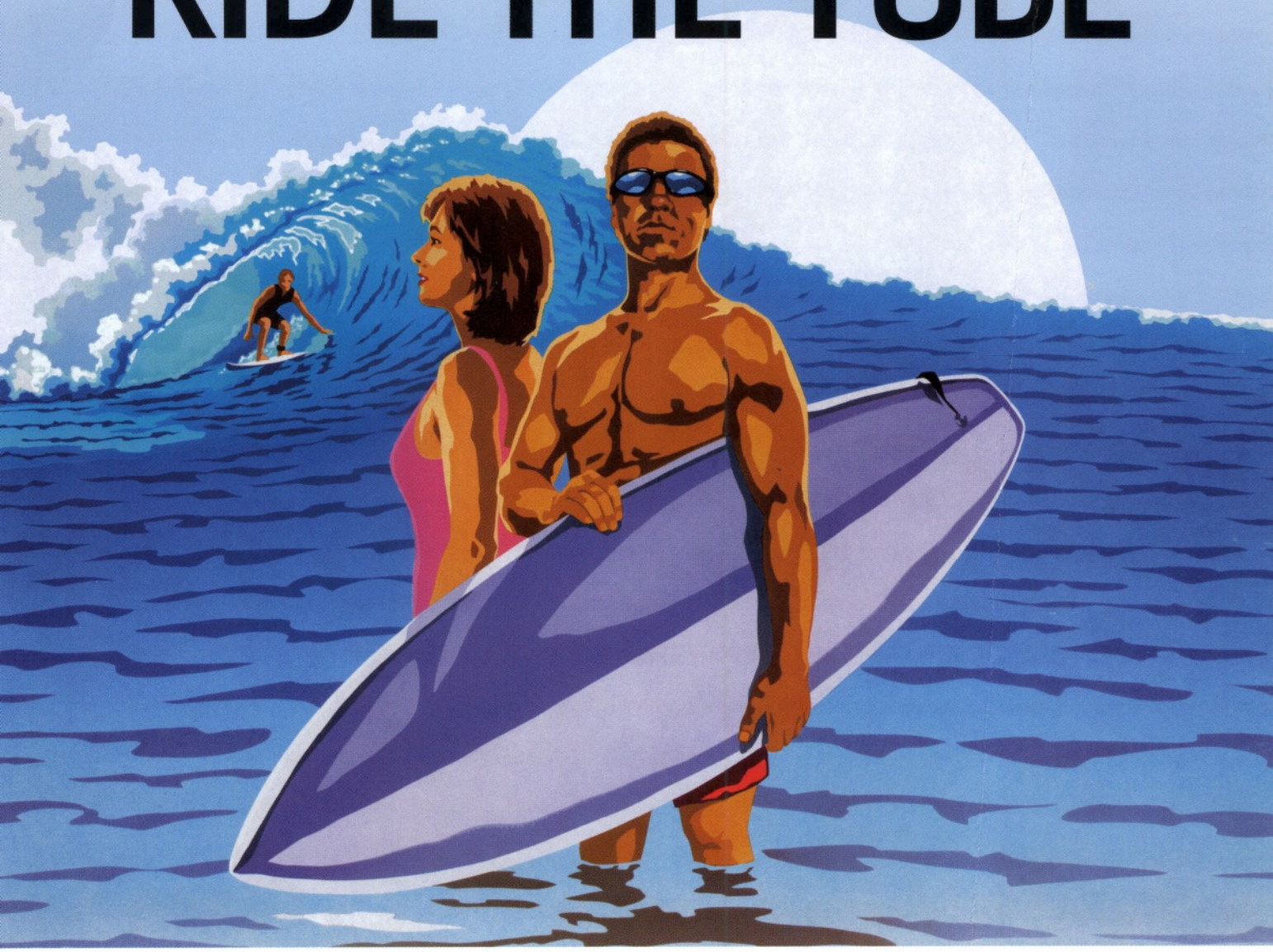
FREE TO RIDE THE TUBE



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